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HARD LINES.

VOL. II.

HARD LINES.

A Nobel.

BY

HAWLEY SMART,

AUTHOR OF

"BREEZIE LANGTON," "SOCIAL SINNERS," "THE GREAT TONTINE,"

"AT FAULT," ETC. ETC.

"Of all the barbarous middle ages, that
Which is most barbarous is the middle age
Of man ; it is—I really scarce know what ;
But when we hover between fool and sage,
And don't know justly what we would be at—
A period something like a printed page,
Black letter upon foolscap, while our hair
Grows grizzled, and we are not what we were."

"The greatest miracle of love is the reformation of a coquette."

IN THREE VOLUMES.—VOL. II.

LONDON: CHAPMAN AND HALL,
LIMITED.

1883.

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Lungay:

CLAY AND TAYLOR, PRINTERS.

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HARD LINES.

CHAPTER I.

EASTWARD HO.

PEOPLE who lose money racing are only too prone to believe that they have met with unfair play, but in this case there could be no doubt that a very serious fraud had been attempted, and the backers of The Mumper, who in a very large proportion hailed from the city of York, were by no means reticent of speech on the subject. At Harker's, indeed, Mr. Bilton, and several minor book-makers who had followed his lead, and been rather bitten in consequence, were profuse in their denunciations of what they termed another of those military

swindles. Something had impressed them with the idea that The Mumper was sure to win, and they had not scrupled to overlay their books about The Cid ; not so much by any means to be pitied as those unfortunates who had backed the black, and had to go through that grimmest of all racing experiences, the winning money and not receiving it, but, on the contrary, having to part with their own. To have to pay, say ten pounds instead of receiving thirty, is wont to curdle the milk of kindness in the veins of humanity. Tongues waxed wicked at Harker's and elsewhere as they wagged over the subject, and public opinion was decidedly coming to the conclusion that Captain Calvert had planned an artful *coup*, had been detected, and ought to be made a pretty severe example of.

“I was told this Mumper was sure to win,” remarked Mr. Bilton oracularly, “but the man as gave me the tip didn't know what the horse was, d'ye see. I wonder

how Major Crymes got hold of it ; I suppose that Hunsley told him."

There was a talk, too, about the race at the Punchbowl, and a small knot of the *habitués* might have been observed to wear a smile of beatitude, little part as they took in the conversation. As for Mr. Boggs, he was not to be seen, and the barmaid, in reply to inquiries, announced that he had left, but for where she did not know. The good man was wont to absent himself after successful management of little affairs of this nature ; whether he feared the undue curiosity of friends, or deprecated their congratulations, who shall say ? It might have been he was tender-hearted, and disliked hearing the wail of those who suffered sorely from his astute manipulation of the strings.

At the club in St. Leonard's Place there was, as may be supposed, much talk about the race, and gradually the idea gained ground that, protest his innocence as he might, Calvert had been perfectly cognizant

of what the horse really was all along, and had intended a *coup* with him. It was argued that Cis had backed The Mumper heavily in comparison with his usual scale of betting. It was pointed out that Harry Harperley had bragged, after that dinner at Byculla Grange, that his owner knew a good deal more about the black than the public dreamed of; in short, it was not difficult to give a very ugly complexion to the matter when you began to collect evidence.

“Those ring men, too,” said a veteran sportsman, who, with his coat-tails subducted under his arms, was standing on the hearth-rug, and luxuriating in all the warmth of the coffee-room fire, “knew something. They went for The Mumper. Now what put that into their noddles if they believed him a black hunter? I fancy there was a whisper about that the old horse had shown himself pretty smart between the flags once or twice before.”

“You’re right, Collison,” said another.

"I happen to know Bilton pretty well, and when I was backing The Cid for a tanner with him he said, 'I'm afraid you're on the wrong pea this time, sir, I'm told this is a real good thing for The Mumper.'"

"It certainly does seem most extraordinary that any one can buy a well-known steeple-chaser without being aware of it. Still I'm told that Mappin declares he knew nothing about it, and Calvert bought the horse from him," said a third.

"That might be all a blind," rejoined the first speaker. "That fellow, Hunsley, we know is a crafty scoundrel. I take it he bought him, and rechristened him with a view to something of this sort. To put him through Mappin's hands was a clever dodge to disarm suspicion. If Calvert was ignorant of the horse's real character, what made him back it as he did? His own people say he never risks more than a pony on a race, and in this case we know he backed his mount for hundreds. We know the story of

his bet with Crymes on the night of the entries, and it is no secret he backed his horse besides on various occasions, this is the most awkward thing against him in the whole business. Heaven knows I don't want to throw stones at a man who is said to be in a pretty big scrape besides, but I think people generally will be hard to convince of Captain Calvert's ignorance concerning The Mumper. As for Hunsley, circumstances not having favoured his committing a robbery himself, that he should seize such a chance of turning money as this offered, is quite in accordance with his general character, and that he should turn round upon his confederates precisely what he might be expected to do. No, if Captain Calvert is innocent in this matter, then he is a most unfortunate man, and victim to a curious combination of events."

The club oracle had spoken, and as all frequenters of the smaller of these monachal institutions are aware, when the Collison of

the establishment has taken the hearth-rug, which does duty for a rostrum, and pronounced judgment therefrom, the minds of many men became decided on the point in discussion. Windbag though the oracle may be, and utterly incompetent of forming an opinion on any subject whatever, yet, till he do be pricked, he shall impose upon the weaker brethren who lack his lung power and assurance.

At the mess of the Lancers that night, also, was the event of the day discussed after the cloth was drawn, though in very much more guarded fashion than it had been commented on at the Club. Cis was popular in his corps, and they were very loth to believe evil of him, indeed the majority stood staunchly to the dictum that he was a victim instead of a victimizer, and yet his stoutest partizans were fain to admit that the identical point which so exercised the York Club was difficult to get over. What had induced him to bet

so very much heavier than his usual habit ? When we see a man who habitually plays whist at shilling points suddenly take to five pound ones, we seek the cause of the phenomenon, as indeed in social life we do any extraordinary increase or decrease apparent in our neighbour's expenditure. A thing this that would trouble some people seriously, leading to liver complaint and all sorts of disturbances of the system till they got to the rights of things. It certainly was unfortunate that Cis had, so to speak, plunged upon this unhappy race. But on the other point, namely, his insult to Crymes, the regiment was very much more divided, and the majority, which numbered in its ranks most of the senior officers, held that there Cis Calvert could not be justified, that the objection had been made in perfect good faith, and with all courtesy ; no imputation whatever had been preferred against Calvert, and that there was no justification possible for the use of the opprobrious

epithet he had made use of. Those who by seniority were best qualified to judge shook their heads, and opined it would be apt to go hard with Calvert, though, as they added meditatively, the Colonel always stood to a good man in a scrape, and more than one story of the irascible martinet's good deeds was told round the ante-room fire that night.

They did their Chief no more than justice. No man in the county of Yorkshire, unless perhaps it was the delinquent himself, was so utterly upset by the whole thing as Colonel Cottlestone. He liked Calvert, and believed in him, but, nevertheless, he saw at once that many people would not do so, but regard the whole affair as an iniquitous swindle. The race he foresaw would be a most unfortunate slur upon the regiment, a thing ever to be flouted in their face, and very difficult to disprove. Then, again, there was the military *fiasco* to be dealt with, and that the Colonel felt

must be settled at once. If the Major would consent to accept an apology there was no necessity for the thing going further, but if not, well, then, it would be beyond his power to arrange, and must be referred to higher authority. The first thing was to send for Crymes; the Major was in his quarters, and promptly responded to the summons, and the two men talked the thing over. Crymes was perfectly willing to leave himself in the Chief's hands, and expressed no vindictive feeling on the subject.

"I don't want to make eating his words unnecessarily hard for him, sir. If Captain Calvert will apologize to me here in your presence and that of the other officers of his own rank, I shall be content to let the thing drop."

"Very good, then, I shall consider that so far settled. You are letting him down quite as easy as is possible, and he ought to feel that. I believe him thoroughly

innocent, but it's a doosed ugly story to have against one, and a monstrous unpleasant thing for the regiment."

"I have strictly abstained from expressing any opinion on Captain Calvert's conduct," rejoined Crymes; "but you can hardly expect the York Club and the neighbourhood to be so reticent."

"And you think their verdict will be condemnatory?"

"I think it is very probable that they will find it difficult to believe that a man who backed a horse—what for him was very heavily—almost immediately it came into his hands, did not know something about its previous history. Please bear in mind, Colonel, I don't express these as my views, and that what I am about to say is said to you alone. I think there are many men who will argue that the very robbery Hunsley intended, and which the enforced sale of his horses doubtless prevented, has been carried out by Captain

Calvert, and there is usually much incredulity displayed as to *accidental* robbery," and Crymes put a cruel inflexion on the adjective as he finished the sentence. The Major was right; loyally though the regiment as a whole stood to him, and though he had still many staunch friends in the neighbourhood, yet Cis Calvert heard from Harry Harperley and others that the public verdict was against him, that he was held guilty of having committed a disgraceful fraud, which was only betrayed at the last moment through the treachery of a well-known scoundrel who had contemplated it himself.

And then Cis began to realize what this race had cost him. It was a terrible Pavia, he had not even saved his honour. All was lost: his commission, he supposed; the girl he loved; money. He was a man without a future. He would leave York, not a beggar, but a man whose life was broken. No wonder that Harry Harperley

told his sister that he never saw a man so cut up as Cis Calvert was by the foul charge under which he lay ; and Annie, with eyes half-blinded with tears and half lightening with anger, rushed to her desk and hastened to scribble a few passionate lines of scornful disbelief in the calumny, and unswerving affection on her own part, and bade Harry take it to the poor prisoner with all speed. She had pictured him to herself in a cell when she first heard of his arrest, but rigid cross-examination convinced her that he was merely prohibited from leaving his rooms.

That little note, though torture to Cis, did him good. It braced him up, roused him from his stupor of despair, and made him pull himself together. Yes, the first thing to be done was to write to Julian Harperley, and while pledging his honour to being guiltless of the accusation laid against him, to, for the present, resign all pretensions to his daughter's hand. "Till I have lived down or disproved the stigma

under which I at present stand it can scarcely be supposed that you will tolerate me in the light of a son-in-law, and, moreover, I love Annie far too dearly to think of inducing her to link her future with one whom most of her friends regard as a black-leg. Pray thank her for her trust and belief in me. It is a consolation to me in my troubles to know that she still counts me a gentleman. What my future plans may be it is impossible for me to decide until I know the Colonel's intentions. As soon as I can I shall send you word what they are, and though I don't venture to ask leave to say good-bye to Annie, indeed shrink from the pain such an interview would be to me, I do claim the privilege of writing her a farewell letter."

Julian Harperley was meditating over what steps it behoved him to take in the matter of this semi-engagement of his daughter when he received Calvert's epistle. He had no disposition in the world to judge

Cis at all hardly, but he could not shut his eyes to the fact that his proposed son-in-law was in a very serious mess just now. As far as the affair with Crymes went, Calvert had lost his temper, and was palpably in the wrong; while about the race, appearances were as black as they well could be. The banker had heard the arguments so tersely expressed by Crymes from more than one person that morning. The club coffee-room at lunch time rang with them. If innocent of the horse's real character or identity, what induced Calvert to back it as he did? Julian Harperley was a kind man, and not given to judge his fellow-creatures harshly; moreover, he knew this would be a sad blow to his daughter, but he could not make up his mind to a verdict of 'not guilty.' The best he could do for the hapless man was to mentally bring him in '*non proven*.' Still he could not but recognize the ring of true metal in that letter. The banker was aware that his daughter's was no half-hearted love,

and that did he choose, Cis Calvert could influence her strongly through it, even in defiance of her better judgment. He confined himself at present to a brief acknowledgment of the epistle and an intimation that he would reply at length as soon as he received Captain Calvert's next communication.

A little more and Cis was summoned to Colonel Copplestone's quarters, and it was made known to him that he must pass beneath the Caudine Forks. "I like you, Calvert, and believe you as straight a young fellow as ever served under me. By heaven ! sir, I believe you perfectly innocent in this matter ; but by George ! there was no excuse for your using the language you did, and you must apologize for it to Major Crymes at once in the presence of these gentlemen," said the Chief sharply.

"You all know with what I stand charged," replied Cis, simply. "I think some allowance is to be made for the indig-

nation with which any man must at the moment regard such a terrible accusation. It has been pointed out to me that Major Crymes made no kind of reflection on myself, and never insinuated that I was party to the scandalous fraud which I assisted to commit. I beg to apologise for the expression I used in my anger, and to withdraw it most utterly before you all."

"I trust, Crymes, you consider that sufficient," said the Colonel, "and that this affair may now be considered as disposed of."

"Certainly, sir; I am satisfied if you are," returned the Major, and touching his cap to the Chief, and with the slightest possible salutation to Calvert, he immediately left the room.

For a few seconds his brethren in rank lingered to shake hands with Cis, and express their gratification at the affair having come to a satisfactory conclusion,

and then they also followed Crymes's example.

"I suppose you've got something to say to me," observed the Colonel, seeing that Calvert still lingered.

"I have first to thank you, sir, for taking my word about that miserable race, and holding me innocent in spite of appearances ; next I have to beg the favour of three days' leave."

"What for ?"

"To arrange an exchange. I cannot continue to serve in the —th Lancers under these circumstances. Were we likely to change station very shortly it might be, but I cannot face this neighbourhood as things stand at present. I have thought the whole thing out quietly in the last forty-eight hours. I am perfectly innocent, but presumption is so strong against me, that I run the risk of being cut in the hunting-field, of being requested to withdraw from the club, &c. This will not

only be agony to me, but excessively unpleasant for the regiment; thank God, as a whole, they believe in me, but to champion my cause would be to put themselves on a very uncomfortable footing with the neighbourhood. Further, I have strong private reasons, which I need not enter into, and lastly, I have lost a good bit of money, which I shall recover by exchanging to India."

For a few minutes the Colonel made no reply, but seemed to muse over Cis's speech. Then he said quietly, almost gently for him, "I shall be very sorry to lose you, Calvert, and if it was only the money, I fancy it could be easily arranged, but we cannot control the opinion of Yorkshire, and I am bound to admit that there's a deal of common sense in what you say. Given we were living in the old duelling days, we couldn't call out the biggest county in the kingdom. It's unlucky, but it's no use blinking the fact,

the case against you is terribly strong. Take your leave, exchange, if you still think it best, at the end of that time, but remember you are not obliged to go, and that if you elect to stay your Colonel will stand by you."

At the expiration of the three days Cis returned from town, proceeded at once to the Chief's quarters, and informed him that he had arranged to exchange to an infantry regiment in India, receiving a difference of two thousand pounds, and next day it was known through the —th Lancers that Calvert was leaving them, and on account of the race for the Cup. There was much commiseration expressed among his staunch friends in the corps, men who believed in him despite the terrible circumstantial evidence against him; but Cis, under pretext of having a good many things to arrange, kept aloof from his sympathisers. There were murmurs against Crymes, but here the Major's

guarded tongue stood him in good stead; his assailants were always confounded with the unanswerable rejoinder "that he had exposed a robbery, but never hinted even that Calvert was concerned in it; that it might as well be said that he had charged Harry Harperley and all other backers of The Mumper with being participators in the fraud, which was absurd." Cis meantime rapidly concluded his final arrangements. He had said good-bye to the Colonel and a few other of his intimates, and settled to leave York by the night-mail for town. He had nothing left him but to write his farewell to Annie, and as he sat down to do that he dropped his head hopelessly on his hand, and reflected bitterly what a terrible change a short week had made in his prospects. To leave the dear old regiment under such a cloud was sad enough, but 'the crowning sorrow' was having to resign Annie. What was he to say to her? He had stipulated

that he should be allowed to write this letter, and now his heart failed him, and he almost felt that he would have rather stole silently away.

“I must bid you good-bye, darling,” he wrote at length, “yes, leave you with but a distant hope of ever claiming you for my own. That you disdain to think I could have been wittingly guilty of the disgraceful fraud with which I am unhappily connected, is the one comfort left to me in my troubles. It was like your own sweet self to stand by the accused and believe him innocent, black though the allegations against him looked. But, Annie, the chivalry must not be all on one side: I could not ask you to be mine while this stain hangs over my name; were it poverty and exile only, I would ask you to have faith, and wait for better times. As it is, I can only restore you your troth. If, when I have righted myself with the world, I find you still free, then, dearest,

I shall once more plead my cause, and fervently trust to a willing ear. Don't quite forget one who can never forget you, and whatever the future may have in store, believe me ever your own,—Cis."

P.S.—"Harry will enlighten you as to my plans for the future."

"Good-bye, Harry," said Cis, as, with a big cigar in his mouth and enveloped in a heavy overcoat, he stood at the open door of a carriage in the railway station at York, waiting for the train to start. "I'd have liked to have given you The Mumper, but it would never do to leave the old horse in the regiment; he would be a perpetual reminder of this wretched race, and you can understand how anxiously I long for it to be forgotten. Tell Mappin he's to dispose of him, but not in these parts, and credit me with what he fetches, less his own percentage; and, Harry, that note's for your sister. You can tell her all about me, and you've got my address,

and, and God bless you, my boy. Remember me to—" and here Cis got a little choked in his voice, wrung young Harperley's hand, and sprang into the train.

CHAPTER II.

A LITTLE TURN UP.

JULIAN HARPERLEY'S astonishment was great when the next day his son told him that Cis Calvert had exchanged into an infantry regiment in India, and already left York for good. The banker felt a sense of intense relief, for he had been much troubled in his mind as to what was to be the upshot of Annie's semi-engagement. He was loth to believe Calvert guilty, and yet he could not honestly say that he deemed him innocent. He felt that to consent to any betrothal between him and Annie was impossible as things stood at present, and yet he knew that his daughter would fire up

at the slightest imputation upon her lover, and hold herself beneath contempt if she did not stand true to him in his hour of trial. They must have come in collision upon this point, and to thwart or oppose the girl in anything would have been very grievous to Julian Harperley. He was compelled to admit that Cis had behaved with great delicacy in the whole business, and felt more inclined to believe in his innocence than he had yet done.

“He was awfully cut up, poor old boy,” continued Harry, “and more about Annie than anything else; but, as I said, she’ll stand to him and wait till he comes back. When we heard he had gone away on three days’ leave we had no idea what it meant. We thought it was something about money; he lost a good bit over the race, you know. He kept it all quite dark the first day after he came back. It wasn’t till he came to saying good-bye to his old pals that we knew he was going to leave us, and, by Jove,

in a few hours he was gone. I saw him off, poor old chap, and he said I was to tell you everything, and give this note to Annie. It's a confounded shame, and I believe that beast Crymes has something to say to it," and the boy's voice shook a little as he uttered the last words.

"You will be writing to him, of course," said the banker, after a little. "When you do, remember me, and tell him that I am highly sensible of the delicacy and consideration he has shown, and thoroughly approve of what he has done."

But it was hardly to be supposed that Miss Aysgarth would take things as quietly as her father. He had told her that Cis had written to him, and would write again when things were definitely settled. She knew from her brother that the quarrel between her lover and Crymes had been successfully patched up, and she knew that Cis had gone up to town on three days' leave. She was not, therefore, at all disturbed at not having

received an answer to her note ; and when Harry handed her Cis's farewell billet, she received it with a flush of exultation, and marched off to her own room to peruse it in comfort. No sooner had she read it than her face fell, and the tears welled into her eyes. What did he mean ? Surely he would never go without at least saying good-bye to her ! He knew she held him guiltless ; she had told him so. When was he going ? What was he going to do ? She did not understand it all ; and then the girl's eyes fell upon the postscript, and having hastily bathed her eyes, she descended in search of her brother.

She found him in the drawing-room. The Cornet was so unhappy about the whole business that he had lingered there on the chance of her wanting him, and in answer to her eager questioning he briefly explained what Cis had done.

“ And you mean to tell me that he has gone—gone for good ?

“Yes, Annie; I saw him off myself last night. It seems awful hard lines that a fellow who has simply been awfully sold should be accused of being a leg and a robber and all that. I don’t understand why Cis should have to go—no, that’s not right, because he especially told me to remember that he was not obliged to go; that the Chief had said so.”

“Then why has he gone?” exclaimed Miss Aysgarth.

“He thought it best himself, and two or three of the seniors, friends of his, mind, I know think he is right.”

“And I know he is wrong,” cried the girl passionately. “Oh why, Cis dearest, could you not take counsel with your promised wife? Who ever overcame a scandal except by facing it? To run away from a lie is to endorse it. I don’t know, Harry, who his counsellors were, but believe me, he has been ill-advised.”

“I don’t know about that; there are

things you women can't quite follow. I don't pretend to be able to myself. I'd pledge my life on Cis Calvert being straight as a line about anything; but to hear some of those fellows argue the case is enough to drive one mad; and upon my soul, Annie, I sometimes wonder they don't accuse me of knowing all about it too."

"They well might," she replied, sadly, "if you gave vent to half the mysterious hints to others you did to me. I suppose you have Cis's address."

"Yes; and though he didn't say so, I think he'll feel pretty bad if he doesn't hear from you before long."

"Write it down for me. I don't want to give him cause of complaint just now. If he had but put faith in woman's wit instead of man's he'd have been still in his old rooms. The one scrape I was incompetent to advise upon he is clear of; about the other I'd have said emphatically, face it to the last, we'll live it down together."

“You’re a rare plucked ’un, Annie,” exclaimed the Cornet in undisguised admiration of his sister’s thorough-going partizanship; “but I don’t think the governor would quite have stood that, you know.”

“What do you mean?”

“That I don’t think he’s likely to consent to any marriage between you and Cis Calvert just now.”

“I’ll never marry any one else,” rejoined the girl quietly. “Still,” she continued more softly, “I don’t think I could wed any one without the dear old dad’s consent. And now good-bye, Harry. Remember I’m always to know everything you hear about Cis; and yes, dear, he’ll be your brother some day.”

With these words Miss Aysgarth left the room; but when the spirit of prophecy possesses man or maiden on the topic of matrimony, the narrator cannot refrain from smiling as he calls to mind the misogynist,

those of his friends who vowed they would marry money, and those more romantic, who vowed they would marry for love, and thinks how seldom man carries out his original intent.

When Horace Crymes became aware that Calvert had left the regiment, he saw at once that 'the something' he had scarce ventured to hope for had intervened in his behalf. He congratulated himself upon the reticence he had maintained throughout the whole business. Far from any one being able to allege that he had ever insinuated aught against Cis, there was the record of their quarrel to prove the contrary. The regiment would testify he had never for one moment suggested that Calvert was a party to the fraud, or had known the horse to be other than he had described him. Miss Aysgarth, in common justice, he thought, could hardly decline his acquaintance on that account, more especially too as she could not pose in the position of being Cis's

fiancée. She surely would have been the last woman to wish that any friend of hers should unwittingly do anything wrong. He, Crymes, unluckily did not obtain his information in time to prevent Calvert starting the horse, but he was able to stay the consequences of his luckless imposture, and surely no gentleman would wish to win a race fraudulently, or the bets connected with it. The Major could not help laughing to himself as he went over the high moral line of argument he intended to take up with Miss Aysgarth ; but he was a shrewd man where women were concerned, and knew that in his own interest he had best avoid that young lady as yet. Specious and unanswerable as his story was, he felt that she would not regard it in that light at present. No, Calvert out of the way, there was plenty of time ; he could afford to wait before he commenced the siege.

That the world generally should consider Cis's disappearance a tacit admission of guilt

was exactly what Miss Aysgarth foresaw ; and stand up for him as his friends might, it was obvious that public opinion ran hopelessly against him.

Known to be a friend of Captain Calvert's, and people dropped speaking on the subject before you, and if you persisted in introducing it, listened with a smile of polite incredulity.

One of the few partisans Cis had outside his old regiment was Charrington. Although he had lost his money over the race, he persisted dogmatically in the Captain's innocence, and vowed he should live to convict the real perpetrators of the fraud yet. He held closely to what we happen to know was the true story, namely, that Mr. Hunsley and his friends had contemplated winning a big stake with the renowned Mumper ; but that when they, from force of circumstances, lost their horse, they had jumped at the opportunity the Cup race had afforded them of getting that stake

by the objection. His dislike to Crymes, and his persistent habit of taking opposite sides from his wife, had no doubt something to say to his opinion, though perhaps it had little to say to his actions. It was always so—he usually differed with Mrs. Charrington, but the lady invariably had her own way. He always disliked her cavalier *serventè*; but that gentleman was, nevertheless, like a tame cat in the house. Hence it happened that while Byculla Grange as a house made mock moan that one of society's favourites should have deviated from the paths of virtue and been convicted of cheating, yet the master himself stoutly declined to believe that it was so.

Thirty years ago, aye, and a good deal later, cheating at cards when detected carried social ostracism with it; in the genial times in which we now live I doubt the offence being considered very heinous. It is devoutly to be trusted that we are getting more civilized, for no one with any

knowledge of the world can pretend that we are getting more moral.

That Mrs. Charrington should launch more than one winged arrow in poor Annie's direction was only too natural. She was not the woman to forego an obvious advantage of that nature. Miss Aysgarth's admirer had gone down in the tilt-yard with smirched scutcheon before her own, and she cannot forego some slight taunts upon the occasion, not a little impelled thereto because she had detected signs of wavering allegiance, she fancied, on the Major's part.

But the weeks wear on, and the story of the race gradually fades away. Cis's accusers have long forgotten to babble to his detriment, and it is only in the hearts of a few of his staunch friends that luckless Cis Calvert is remembered. There is little fear he should be forgotten at The Firs, and Annie and Harry Harperley pass many an hour over an enlarged map of India, studying the station in the Deccan which

Cis has written to Harry to tell him is his destination.

“I’m told, young ’un,” he wrote, “I’ve exchanged into the very slowest infantry regiment in the whole service. They’ve been in India the last eighteen years, and have almost forgotten their own language; the officers speak a species of *patois*, a mixture of English and Hindoo; the ladies of the corps are mostly more or less dark—be-gums, I presume, who have forgot themselves, and thrown away their future on the impoverished youth of the Feringee; but some, I fancy, are of less distinguished lineage. Sport, I am told, in the way of shooting is plentiful of all sorts; but for society—well, I see I am not to expect it regimentally. What does it all matter to me? I have come here for a specific purpose, and shall know no peace till the scandal is either lived down or my name cleared, and that I may once more address your sister as her affianced lover.”

Cis Calvert might make light of the future that lay before him in his letter to Harry Harperley, but it was with a sad heart that he took his berth on board of one of Green's clippers, and made sail for Madras.

But there was another thing that shortly arose out of the Cid's triumph in the Cup, and that was, that Mr. Blundell's insolence and arrogance became past bearing, and created no little ill-feeling amongst his co-mates. Mr. Blundell, it must be borne in mind, had his pockets very handsomely lined by the result of the race, although Isham Boggs, in strict accordance with the principles that characterized his career, had contrived to decamp without paying quite all the money he had covenanted to do. Still, bets and one thing and another made Tom Blundell more flush of coin than perhaps he had ever been before in the whole course of his life. He was a moderate *viveur* in his way, and when in funds rather enjoyed dispensing hospitality in somewhat patronizing fashion.

The grooms and stable-men of the corps were no more averse than their betters to the good things of this world, and a man who was open-hearted in regard to the standing of drinks could naturally depend upon a considerable following. Mr. Blundell never tired of jeering Tim Murphy about 'the black colt,' as he humorously designated The Mumper, nor of telling the story of how he ferretted out the great Mr. Boggs, and so got at the truth concerning the horse ; and his sycophantic following, as they tossed off their glasses, would indulge in such phrases as—"It was 'cute of you, Tom, there's no denying ; but then, d—n it all, man, you're Newmarket raised," or, " Well, the way you turned that poor devil Tim inside out, and put the puzzle together afterwards, was a caution."

So it came to pass that the myrmidons of the officers' stables were divided into two parties, of whom the smaller faction were headed by Blundell, and the larger sided

with Murphy. About what they differed was not so clear. There was bad blood between Blundell and Tim over the race naturally, but why their respective partisans should have established a feud was difficult of explanation. However, so it was, and the taunts of the Blundellites, chiefly instigated by that gentleman himself, served further to embitter it.

“Well, my whistling friend,” said Mr. Blundell, as on his way to his own stables he passed Tim strapping a horse, “have you got never another secret to let out? It was uncommon kind of you to bring me and Mr. Boggs together it was; blessed if we should ever have got at the history of that ’ere black colt of yours without his help. You’d better have let me stand in, eh?”

“Yez’ll go a thrifle too far, my jewel, one of these fine days,” returned Tim drily. “We knew nothing about our horse, though it seems you did.”

Mr. Blundell responded to this by a wink,

and singing a verse of a slang popular lyric—

“The painted bit is in his mouth,
They’re slating him, oh my !
Although, my dear, I’m from the south,
Susannah, I am fly.”

“By me sowl, if you insinuate the Captain knew anything about it I’ll spoil your face for a congregation of baboons,” retorted Tim fiercely.

“Knew !” rejoined Blundell, tauntingly, and advancing a step or two nearer to the Irishman. “All serene,” he continued. “Knew ! I suppose he didn’t back that old black devil as if he knew something. Knew ! oh yes, he knew, which fully accounts for the milk of the cocoa-nut,” and Mr Blundell wound up by snapping his fingers in the Irishman’s face, a compliment which Tim promptly reciprocated by knocking him down.

This speedily produced a rush of some half-dozen or more of on-lookers to the spot,

and Mr. Blundell, having picked himself up, at once challenged his antagonist to come round to the field at the back of the barracks and have it out there and then. This arrangement was so completely in accordance with the feelings of the handful of gentlemen assembled, that an adjournment thereto was immediately made. No sooner had they arrived than seconds were selected, the two men stripped to the waist and stood up to one another. It was at once apparent that Tim was considerably the bigger man of the two, having considerable advantages in height, reach, and weight, but as a set off against these it was very soon apparent that the Newmarket man had been taught to use his hands, while Tim, in the old prize ring vernacular, was but 'a countryman.' They fought some half-dozen rounds, and in the beginning Mr. Blundell, thanks to his superior science, had unmistakably the best of it; but Tim took his punishment doggedly, and came up again and again,

and forced the fighting as if having it all his own way. No doubt superior weight and strength served him a good deal, but there was one thing aided him a good deal more, and that was, Mr. Blundell was not a very good plucked one. It was all very well while he was fresh, and having things pretty much as he liked. So long he was bumptious enough, but when it settled down into a ding-dong give-and-take business, Mr. Blundell found himself the recipient of some pretty rough handling, and got too weak to stop Tim's fierce rushes and rather round hitting; then he got very sick of the job, and speedily announced his intention of giving in, as the Irishman was too big for him. His seconds, their own frontispieces not being in danger, nobly exhorted him to

“Take a suck at the lemon and at him again.”

But Mr. Blundell said he had had enough, put on his upper garments, and scandalized

his supporters by declining to be beaten insensible.

This little turn up had one result—Mr. Blundell came to the conclusion that chaffing Tim was rather an expensive amusement if it was to be paid for by such a rough twenty minutes as had been his lot that morning, and kept his gibes at the Irishman's expense for the immediate ears of his intimates only.

Thanks to Blundell's babbling and what he already knew, Tim was now aware that the mysterious Isham Boggs who had exhorted him to call at the Punchbowl was the source from which Major Crymes had derived his information as to The Mumper being in reality a horse called the Black Doctor; and after much cogitation Tim thought it right that this knowledge should be in the hands of some friend of the Captain's. But who, was the question. Tim first thought of Harry Harperley, but at length decided he was too young. Then he

hesitated a good deal about taking his tidings to the banker. He thought over this for some time, but finally, he could hardly tell why, came to the conclusion to tell such story as he had to tell to Mr. Charrington.

Tim might not arrive at his conclusions quickly, but when it had permeated his brain that this was the gentleman most likely to take the cudgels up hotly in behalf of his old master, Tim took the first opportunity of presenting himself at Byculla Grange.

CHAPTER III.

THE ROYAL DUNBARS.

LOUNGING in one of those low cane easy-chairs with flat elongated arms, so much in vogue both in America and the East, is a man who looks out from the verandah of his bungalow with a jaded, wearied expression somewhat sad to contemplate. He stares listlessly across the dusty road at the sandy, rock-studded plain, while he sucks lazily at his cheroot, and his thoughts wander back to the best fox cover in Yorkshire, a soft November day, and such an afternoon as comes but rarely in the lives of most men. How he loathes this everlasting sunshine, how he detests the country,

and how he wonders what is to be the end of it all.

Cis has joined his new regiment at Secunderabad in the Deccan some months now, and though he has honestly tried to make the best of them, is fain to confess they are beyond him. They are a class of men with whom he has hardly an idea in common; promotion has been slow, the corps years in the country, and all the men of his own standing in the service are not only very much older than himself, but so completely Indianized that he fails to get on with them. The younger men take their tone from the seniors, and as Cis mentally remarks, such a fossilized regiment he never supposed to be existent.

The seniors are like so many military Rip Van Winkles, and he constantly expects those stupendous tiger-shooting reminiscences to be varied with some personal experiences of the siege of Seringpatam.

On the other hand, there can be no doubt

that Cis had been viewed with distaste from the first. These tough old Anglo-Indians were not prepared to look favourably on a light dragoon. "We don't mean to stand any of his Lancer swagger here," had been said concerning him more than once before he appeared amongst them; and when he did they resented his youth. That a captain barely thirty should presume to take his place amidst these grisly centurions was in itself a reminder of the inequality with which the prizes of the profession were dispensed. That 'a young whippersnapper,' to use their own term, who had been lounging about Hounslow, Hampton Court, and Brighton in kid gloves and varnished boots, whilst they were fighting and frying, should have attained similar standing in the military hierarchy to their own was in itself a cause of irritation; and then to complete the list of his offendings, Cis openly expressed disgust with the country and its customs, and could not refrain

from an occasional smile at the peculiar habits of the veterans by whom he was surrounded.

A more curious living picture-gallery than the seniors of the Royal Dunbars it was impossible to imagine. That it was advisable to live temperately in a tropical climate was a maxim which, if it had ever been brought to their attention, they evidently had no belief in ; they were what is termed free livers, and late in the evening their various somewhat obsolete peculiarities came out. Two of the veterans were fire-eaters, with fond memories of the old duelling days, and it was no uncommon thing with either of these gentlemen to leave the mess-room with somewhat uncertain step, and a scowling intimation that you should hear from them in the morning ; but of course the menaced one never did, and was met next day without the faintest allusion to the trifling difference of the night before. To say of two or three of

them, oh, *splendide mendax* would be to cast an unmerited reflection perhaps upon them as a whole ; but though they had all more or less talent in that way, after the custom of those whose brains have ripened under a tropical sun, yet were there some few gifted beyond their fellows in this respect. Men whose adventures in regard to tigers, elephants, hair-breadth escapes, and matters of gallantry held their comrades awe-struck, and, curious to relate, the venerable stories always elicited the same attention and applause. One of their number indeed was wont to act as fogleman on such occasions, and bringing his hand down with a mighty smack on the dinner-table, direct the laughter and applause. Whatever these elderly Lotharios might have committed in their youth, it is certain that their days of devilment were over ; they never went into women's society, and the apparition of a lady would have paralyzed the tongues of the gay old dogs, and eventuated in their

slinking off to their respective bungalows in most admirable confusion.

That Cis should feel utterly miserable among associates of this kind may be easily imagined. That the few married ladies of the corps were what he had libellously asserted them to be was of course not the case ; but still they were women of little attraction, and whose talk was simply cantonment gossip. He had been six months doing duty with the Royal Dunbars and had not an intimate in the regiment, and had further the comforting reflection that he had attained considerable unpopularity with the seniors. He had failed to be impressed with some of those tiger stories ; he had been detected yawning at their repetition. He had even stopped old Jungleton, the champion Ananias, in his crack story about the 'must' elephant with an intimation that he had heard it before. A slightly incredulous smile had been detected on his face when Brevet-Major

Lovejoy narrated that little episode of his affair with the collector's wife at Burruncompoota. In short, the centurions of the Royal Dunbars voted Cis a supercilious beast, and fought shy of him accordingly. His life was hideously monotonous—duty and the dulness of a mess dinner, books, and rackets. Friends he had none. In his isolation from feminine society—a bitter thing to men of Cis Calvert's stamp—he had imprudently said that he did not believe there was a woman in the cantonment worth knowing. His remark had been bruited abroad, and was not calculated to make things more pleasant for him.

He was sitting listlessly at mess as usual one night when he heard Jungleton suddenly exclaim—

“I say, Lovejoy, have you heard the news? Daventry is coming here as chief of the Commissariat; there's a chance for you, you dog!”

“Ha, ha!” chuckled the disturber of the

collector's peace, "I leave that sort of thing now to the young ones, but I've heard plenty about Mrs. Daventry in the upper province. There'll be a row here, Jungerley, mark my words, before the year is out. Never knew the Daventrys twelve months in a place that result didn't come off."

"I presume the Daventrys are people with a history," remarked Cis.

"I should rather think they are," growled old Jungleton. "It's a thundering shame a fellow like that should be kept on the staff, while men who have seen twice his service are still grinding away at regimental duty. Why, there's hardly a play scandal for the last twenty years he hasn't been more or less mixed up in, and as for his wife—Well, they say, Calvert, the ladies of the cantonment don't meet your approval; I shall be curious to hear what you think of Mrs. Daventry."

"I'm not likely to see much of them; play is not the least in my line, and from

what you say I judge that forms a prominent feature of the Daventry *ménage*.

“That’s a delusion a good many men have fallen into. I tell you what, though I don’t suppose you’ll think much of my opinion, you may consider you understand women,—all young men do,—but just bear in mind you don’t understand tigers.”

“I don’t understand you,” said Cis, laughing. “You surely cannot mean these Daventrys are as dangerous as all that. I’m not in the least likely to make love to the lady or play *écarté* with her husband.”

“And immediately the cock crew,” muttered the veteran. “If you won’t take a hint I’ve no more to say. I’ve slain a good many tigers in my time, but when you are not prepared to kill them it’s safest to keep out of their way.”

Cis’ curiosity was somewhat excited, and he would have fain questioned Jungleton further concerning the Daventrys; but the old warrior declined any longer discussion,

and the subject rapidly disappeared from Calvert's memory.

He was cantering home from the racket court one evening, and pulled up at the band as he often did, hovering in darkness on the outskirts of the circle, and keeping well away from the lights of the music-stands on account of some strange ideas the General commanding entertained on the wearing of uniform on such occasions. A carriage drawn up in a somewhat prominent position attracted his attention, more from the men that swarmed round it than from anything he could see of the occupants; that it contained two ladies was easy to make out, but from where he was it was impossible to make any guess at their personal appearance. Twilight there is none in the tropics, and the band in India discourses its harmony in what has been termed 'a dim religious light.' Turning to an acquaintance Cis inquires, "Who is the attraction over there?"

“That ? Oh, that is Mrs. Daventry, just arrived. She’s a sweet pretty woman, and carries on pretty much as if Daventry didn’t exist. I don’t know her, but she has the reputation of having brought most of her admirers to grief.”

“Thanks,” replied Cis. “I shall hope to have a good look at her some of these days ; no seeing her just now. Good night.”

Weeks passed on, and Calvert thought little about the Daventrys. He heard they had taken one of the best bungalows in the place, and entertained a good deal. Daventry’s dinners were said to be ‘monstrous well done,’ while Mrs. Daventry’s weekly receptions were talked about as quite the pleasantest entertainments in the cantonment ; but Cis so rarely went into society that he had never come across them, and though, after the Indian custom, whereby the new-comer is expected to take the initiative in the matter of calling, Major Daventry had

left a card upon him, yet Cis had never troubled himself to return it.

But if he had thought but little of the Daventrys, the lady felt no little curiosity about him. That she was speedily *au courant* with all the gossip of the station was matter of course, and what she gathered about Cis Calvert piqued her not a little.

This ex-light dragoon who had suddenly appeared in what a woman like Mrs. Daventry knew to be a very heavy regiment indeed was a phenomenon worth investigating. A man who had done that must have come badly to grief in some way. She couldn't help puzzling her pretty head as to what had brought Captain Calvert into the Royal Dunbars. His speech about the ladies of the cantonment, which had excited such indignation when first noised abroad, made her smile. She had not been there at the time, and so could very properly consider herself as not included in the category, and she rather admired what in these days

is designated 'side' in a man. That Captain Calvert rarely entered society again interested her when she heard it.

"Don't think Indian society good enough, I fancy," remarked a good-looking youngster to Mrs. Daventry, in answer to some leading questions on this point. "In fact, he's rather too great a swell for us, and we could do without him very well."

"Perhaps you don't know him as yet," rejoined the lady.

"That's just it," cried young Heckington, "we don't; and I tell you what, Mrs. Daventry, I suspect he don't want to know *us*."

From what she had heard of the Royal Dunbars Mrs. Daventry could imagine that possible of a man who had probably mixed in the London world. Captain Calvert, in short, aroused her imagination. What crime or misfortune had cast this lost planet without his natural firmament? Why was he so far from Hounslow, Ascot, Hyde Park,

Belgravia, and the happy hunting grounds ? She had slight experience of these in her own person, and could not at times help wondering how she became linked to the plausible gambler who now controlled her destiny. Controlled ! The world generally would have said that Lizzie Daventry had taken her life in her own hands, and did as she liked with small reference to her husband. One person knew better, and that was Lizzie Daventry herself. It was seldom her lord interfered, but when he did, no man ever exercised marital authority with more relentless severity. She had plenty of pluck, was by no means deficient in spirit, but she dare no more face the Major's cold, cutting sneers than brave public contumely by running away from him ; and she had been sometimes sore tempted to discharge her matrimonial obligations in that fashion. What she might have been under happier auspices it is useless to conjecture. She was now, she might justly plead, what Hugh

Daventry had made her. That distinguished officer's career had been a mystery to a good many of his professional brethren ; he passed tranquilly from one good staff appointment to another with a halo of scandalous stories surrounding his name that would have sufficed to ruin the prospects of any other man. But there are those gifted with the faculty of skating over thin ice, and Daventry was one of them. His moral character might not stand high, but his ability was undoubtedly great, and in those days perhaps the former was less considered than the latter in official appointments. Hugh Daventry had proved himself a smart soldier more than once when opportunity had offered, and in our restless Indian empire it is seldom a man finds that long lacking ; while there could be no doubt about one thing, that wherever the Daventrys might be stationed their house formed a central feature of the cantonment. You might recall many a story you had heard to

the Major's detriment, but there was no denying he was an excessively well-bred, agreeable man in his own bungalow. You might have heard tales of the heartless coquetry of his wife, but it was not easy to remember them against the pretty high-bred woman who received you with such a charm of manner. This probably was the secret of their immunity. Anglo-Indian society has never been accused of being puritan in its morals, and was not likely to hold aloof from the pleasantest house in the station because the host and hostess were talked about. Everything was well done at the Daventrys', and you were sure to meet all the best people of the place there.

Still Captain Calvert had never yet made his bow, nor even acknowledged the courtesy of the Major's card. The two men had met a few times in the racket-court, for Daventry had been a good player in his day, and although past his best was no despicable antagonist even now; they had got on very well

together on these occasions, but nothing more. The Major was not the least inclined to stand upon ceremony when he wanted to know a man, and he had rather a hankering to know Calvert. He was the sole man in the cantonment that had the slightest conception of the cause of Cis's presence in Secunderabad. An old cavalry friend at Mhow had remarked in a letter—"So you have got Cis Calvert at your station, tumbled down to infantry in consequence of some scrape at York. I don't know the particulars, but fancy he lost a lot of money over some regimental race. He was, I think, about the best of that very hard-riding lot three years ago, and if you should want a jockey I recommend you to cultivate his acquaintance. I don't know much of him myself, but have always heard he's a deuced good fellow to boot." Daventry never threw a chance away, and nothing was more probable than his wanting some one to ride for him at the Ski races

in the autumn. Still, Cis was not the sort of man you could force an intimacy upon, and Daventry, who had graduated in good society, had quite tact enough to see that.

There was little interchange of confidences between the Major and his wife ; but when people entertain there is of necessity some discussion of those among whom they are cast, if it be only with regard as to the issuing of invitations, and in this manner Mrs. Daventry had learnt the little her husband knew about Calvert, and had also been informed that she was not to neglect an opportunity of making his acquaintance. She was not likely to do that, for her curiosity was much exercised concerning him. Accustomed to be sought after, *fêted*, and made much of wherever she went, she felt piqued that Calvert had not sought her acquaintance. If he had been some old Indian misogynist she would never have troubled her head about him, but that the whilome crack horseman of the —th Lancers

should be vegetating in an Indian cantonment perplexed her much. What was this scrape that had transferred him to the Royal Dunbars? Was it play, or an *affaire de cœur*? Mrs. Daventry was a woman of some experience with regard to both those thunderstorms of social life, and could have imparted sound advice in such exigency. She had seen Cis on some two or three occasions, and was bound to admit that, though well-looking enough, there was nothing striking in his appearance. A fair slight man of medium height, with no particularly good feature in his face, if we except the mouth; that was small, with a well-cut expressive upper lip, which, now the moustache, in compliance with the regulations, had been ruthlessly shorn, was almost too tell-tale. Women, as a rule, read faces they care to study better than men, and, as the physiognomist well knows, the mouth is the index feature. In the few glimpses she had caught of him nothing had

struck Mrs. Daventry so much as the weary look that played around Cis Calvert's lips. Hugh might think it a play scrape of some kind that had brought this man to India; Lizzie Daventry felt sure there was a love-story of some sort at the bottom of it, and felt all the curiosity of her sex to be possessed of that tale.

If there is one phase of the irony of fate more striking, though common, than another, it is the way we are so constantly compelled to know people we have distinctly made up our minds we never will know. You avoid them successfully for years; the danger has been escaped so long you have ceased to think about it, when lo, at some social gathering, before you can open your mouth to expostulate, some fussy busy-body has brought you face to face with your *bête noir*, and exclaimed, "Let me make two men who ought to know each other acquainted." Nothing for it but to grin and express your delight, and walk home

afterwards indulging in ferocious anathemas towards your well-meaning friend.

Cis Calvert had not more particularly avoided the Daventrys than he had society generally, but he had been very successful, as may be supposed, in maintaining the seclusion he desired. You must have the reputation, at all events, of a good deal to bestow before people, finding their first overtures unmistakably rejected, persistently endeavour to cultivate your acquaintance.

Chance, which determinates a good many things in this world, at last made Cis acquainted with the Daventrys, and it happened in this wise. A man Calvert had known something of in England arrived at Secunderabad *en route* for Nagpore. He was also an acquaintance of the Major's, and in accordance with the Arabian custom of hospitality prevailing in India in those times, quartered himself without scruple on the Daventrys. Having accompanied his host to the racket-court, he there encountered

Cis, and greeted him cordially. There were a few allusions to old days, and then the Major chimed in with—

“Come and eat your dinner with us to-night, Calvert, and then you and Wrotsley can have a gossip over old times. I’ve no party for you, nobody but ourselves, unless Mrs. Daventry has picked up by good fortune a waif or two who have consented at short notice to break the monotony of a family dinner in Wrotsley’s behalf.”

And not knowing exactly what other answer to make, Cis assented.

CHAPTER IV.

MRS. DAVENTRY.

As Cis Calvert dressed for dinner he cursed the facile disposition that had led him to accept an invitation he would have fain declined. He reflected ruefully, as many of us have often done, why was he not more ready with his lie? It is as well to have a store of such subterfuges handy in case of being asked to join in what we dislike. They are not very hard to improvise, but they are still easier to keep in stock, and yet is anything more common than that plaintive social cry—"I don't want to go, but how could I help it? I didn't know how to get out of it." Cis has no particular feeling against the Daventrys; he has

known something of society's black sheep in his time, and feels bound to confess that their folds were usually pleasant places ; but he shrinks from all society at present, and the idea of this dinner is exceeding irksome to him. Wrotsley and he were very good friends some five or six years ago, but he does not feel impelled to get enthusiastic about Wrotsley at present. Daventry he knows to be pleasant, and Mrs. Daventry he hears is. He wonders a little what the lady is like, for as yet he has never really seen her. He knows the carriage by sight at the band, but the sun has dipped below the horizon always before that discourses sweet melody, and in the semi-darkness of a tropical evening it is impossible to form much idea of the fair occupant. She, on the contrary, has seen him through glasses on more than one field-day, and is perfectly conversant with his personality.

"They say she is both pretty and pleasant," muttered Cis, as he adjusted his

neckcloth, but the fellows here are naturally uncommon liberal in their verdicts to that effect. Any tolerably good-looking woman ought to pass for a beauty in these parts, and as for pleasant, hum, that's always matter of opinion, and a point upon which I and most of my brethren of 'the Dunbars' would hardly coincide."

A few minutes before eight Cis swung himself on to the back of his 'tat,' as those clever slaves of ponies are usually called, and cantered quietly across to the Daventrys' bungalow. If he had been asked what he expected to find his hostess like, he would probably have replied with a smile—"Oh, a bold showy woman, with a rather pronounced manner," and was no little surprised when Daventry presented a slight fragile brunette with magnificent dark eyes to him as his wife. Her quiet self-possessed bow and the rather *trainante* tones in which she welcomed him, were also very much the reverse of what Cis had pictured to himself.

Lizzie Daventry's quick eye detected in a minute that she was other than he had expected, and resolved to make the most of the impression she saw she had produced.

"India I am told is all new to you at present, Captain Calvert," she remarked, as she signalled with her fan that he should drop into the chair next her. "I must not therefore ask you how you like it, because I feel sure you detest it. Men always do; boys who have just escaped from school or college may be delighted with it, but for those who have really known life at home it is a terrible change. Some of us get reconciled to it in time, but it is rather dreary work in the first instance."

"I don't complain," returned Cis; "I came here of my own free will, so why should I? The ways of the country take a little getting into, and I've perhaps hardly mastered them yet. One may not like it as well as home, but still make out very well all the same."

“Some do, but not such as you, Captain Calvert,” replied Mrs. Daventry with a faint smile.

“Why, what can you know about me?” exclaimed Cis.

“Not very much,” returned the lady, “but still perhaps a little more than you fancy; but dinner, I see, is announced, so perhaps you will give me your arm. That you have not been asked to a more formal banquet rests upon your own head.”

“Yes, it was rash, I know,” replied Cis, as they passed on to the dining-room, “to venture within the precincts without having properly salaamed in the porch; but I’ll plead guilty to being bad at calling at any time, and especially upon intruding on a strange country. This Indian idea of the new-comer calling upon the old residents is both a tyrannous and appalling system.”

“The argument hardly applies in the present case, as I think, Captain Calvert, it was our misfortune to stand in that

painful predicament as far as you were concerned."

Remembering that unreturned call of the Major's, Cis felt that this was an unprofitable topic to pursue, and could hardly help laughing at himself for having given such a palpable opening; as if women did not ever keep as careful register of those unpaid calls as an Israelite of an unmet bill.

"You are mistress of the situation, Mrs. Daventry," he replied at length. "What am I to plead in mitigation? Sultriness of climate, sulkiness of man, or simple oblivion of social amenities? I put in all three pleas, mind, and then further plead I am already sufficiently punished."

"How so?" she asked, raising the grand dark eyes to his for an instant.

"In having been for many weeks without the privilege of Mrs. Daventry's acquaintance."

"Ah, there's a touch of the *beau sabreur* about that speech," she rejoined, laughing;

“so I suppose I must forgive you. Cut those ducks up for me, please, in token of having taken service under my banner. No, I don’t quite mean that, but as sign that there is amity between us.”

“I trust so,” said Cis, as he proceeded to dissect the couple of wild duck in front of his hostess ; “and now, would you deem me very rude if I ventured to ask what you may know about me ? ”

“Very little in truth. It was rather woman’s braggadocio than actual fact that remark of mine. All we know of you is this, that you were in the —th Lancers, and supposed to be about the best horseman in that very hard-riding regiment.”

“And you never heard why I left them ? ” rejoined Cis with a bitterness in his tones that made Mrs. Daventry stare.

“No ; but I have all a woman’s curiosity,” she replied, quietly. “Only please bear in mind, Captain Calvert, I am not inviting a confidence. Our acquaintance hardly

justifies that sort of thing as yet, nor do I think you likely to be one of those who burns to unbosom himself to the first-comer."

"I'm not given to boring my fellow-creatures with extracts from my biography," rejoined Cis tartly.

"He will tell me the whole story before the month's out," was Lizzie Daventry's mental commentary on this remark.

"A most unnecessary labour, as you will see when you come to understand India. The gossip of the station will supply all details of your birth, parentage, and mis-spent life. Don't think me flippant, Captain Calvert, when I use the word mis-spent. I merely mean that it is the *betises* of your career you will find chronicled, while your good deeds, if you have any, and my experience of men scarce lends itself to the belief, will remain unrecorded."

"Not much good to recount of most of us," rejoined Cis, "I'm afraid; but you

“speak rather more bitterly concerning us as a whole than I think we deserve.”

“It may be I’ve good cause,” rejoined the lady, slightly dropping her voice, and stealing a glance at Cis from under her long dark eyelashes; “but it’s time Mrs. Cornwallis and I left you to your wine. She and her husband live in the next bungalow, and when I heard your serene highness, who had so far declined our acquaintance, meant honouring us, not daring to receive you *en famille*, I asked them to come at short notice.”

“Am I never to be forgiven?” said Cis, lifting a chair out of her way as she moved towards the door.

“Yes,” she replied, with a little nod, “if you make your appearance in the verandah for coffee within a reasonable period.”

Cis bent his head in reply, and then turned to exchange reminiscences with Wrotsley, leaving his host to entertain Dr. Cornwallis. These talks over old times

come to all of us, and no one can deny their fascination. Albeit we have a vague remembrance that we detested the place when there, and that the companion now calling up the old scenes to our imagination was one of our special aversions; yet our heart warms to it all, we express fond desire to see the old place again, and think how mistaken we were in our friend; that he really is by no means a bad fellow, and we regret we hadn't known him better in those days gone by. All a delusion! He has presented us with a pair of roseate spectacles, recalled to us the years that are flown, brought back for an hour to each of us

‘*Ma jeunesse que je regrette.*’

Poof! if we saw the place again we should hate it, and if we saw much more of him we should quarrel with him. Similarly, it is a common weakness of men to implicitly believe in certain cates of their boyhood, in some cake or pudding the equal of which

they never have the good luck to meet in mature life. If ever they do once more cross that peculiar pie or pastry, a sad wail over the deterioration of the artist's culinary powers is the invariable result.

But interchange of reminiscences is apt to be rather a prolonged affair, and Daventry, having asked Cis expressly to talk over old times with Wrotsley, could hardly suggest their curtailment, consequently it was some time before they adjourned to the verandah on the other side. Mrs. Daventry welcomed them with a sweet smile, and Cis bethought him of following up his dinner conversation, but in that he was mistaken. Mrs. Daventry chose to play hostess, and dexterously attached Wrotsley to her side, so that Cis was left to make acquaintance with Doctor Cornwallis, a shrewd, pleasant man, with much experience of the country, and who had known the Daventrys on and off at various stations for the last ten years.

“You must find the Royal Dunbars a

somewhat quiet-going lot after the —th Lancers, Captain Calvert,” remarked the Doctor, sententiously, as he ejected a cloud of smoke from between his lips.

“Why, did you know anything of the —th Lancers?” inquired Cis carelessly.

“Yes, I knew them well enough some twenty years ago, when they were out in this country, and a mighty wild lot they were then, and by all accounts they’re not much steadier now. You look astonished at my venturing such an opinion, but remember, India is nothing, after all, but a vast military camp, and then, given to gossip as we are, the doings of our comrades at home have always considerable interest for us. There is hardly a regiment out here that could not be said to have its military correspondent at home in the shape of some one who writes to an old friend in it.”

Cis glanced keenly towards the speaker, but in the semi-darkness of the verandah

it was impossible to see his face. Was he speaking at random? or did these people already know the history of that miserable race? It did not make much difference, he thought; if they did not now they doubtless soon would. What a fool he had been to suppose it wouldn't follow him to India! His first impulse had been right, namely, to leave the service altogether, as if he remained in it he would be always liable to have it thrown in his teeth; but here his reverie was interrupted by his host, who proffered another cheroot.

“Hope you don't dislike this smoking in obscurity, Calvert,” he exclaimed, “but we old Indians rather affect it. We get a little too much of the brilliant sunlight, and learn, like bats, to revel in the night-fall; however, after you've smoked that we'll go in, and I dare say my wife will give us a little music.”

“No more tobacco for me, thanks,” replied Cis, rising. “We are given to hope, Mrs.

Daventry, that you are about to crown your hospitality by playing to us."

"I will either play or sing to you with pleasure, if you are quite sure you wouldn't rather lounge here, talking, smoking, and watching the fire-flies. I *can* sing, Captain Calvert; it happens to be one of the things I know I do well, but pray don't think it incumbent on yourself to ask me because you have heard I do sing."

"I can imagine Mrs. Daventry doing most things well," rejoined Cis, "and trust she will allow us to judge of her singing."

"I don't profess many accomplishments," rejoined the lady, smiling as she rose, "but I possess one given to few of us. I comprehend my *métier*. I know what I can do and what I can't. I can ride, dance, and sing, and have, perhaps, some one or two other gifts, the which I shall leave Captain Calvert to discover; and now reciprocate my candour and unfold your accomplishments."

“Don’t know that I’ve got many,” replied Cis, as they entered the drawing-room. “I can both ride and dance a bit, can shoot decently straight, and that’s about all. I can’t sing, and don’t pretend to be clever. I got my commission in the pre-educational days, you see, which was lucky. I was eminently adapted, indeed am still, for a profession in which you were not expected to know.”

“Oh, I have little doubt you are sufficiently wise in your generation. What shall I sing you? do you like ballads? There is, I think, nothing so delightful, when properly sung, in the shape of singing as the ballad; but of course you may give it like a musical box, or you may make the water stand in people’s eyes.”

“I quite agree with you, and it is the former rendering that we more usually encounter in society.”

“This is a favourite of mine. A man’s song more than a woman’s perhaps, but it

always strikes me as so unutterably sad," and striking a few chords with practised touch on the piano by way of prelude, she burst into Kingsley's famous ballad of "When all the world is young, lad." The dash of spirit and boyish hope of the first verse were given with exquisite fire and animation, and then the flexible contralto voice sank to mournful regret as the singer commenced the second with "When all the world is old, lad," finally descending almost to a wail of despair as she faltered out the concluding words—

" Creep home and take your place, lad,
The halt and maimed among ;
God save you find one face, lad,
You loved when all were young."

To Cis, still chafing at his exile, the ballad as rendered by Lizza Daventry appealed powerfully. He wondered how he should find things at The Firs when he 'crept home.'

It was all nonsense, of course, that a man

should be so moved as Cis was by this ballad, but we must remember what had happened to him in the last few months, and further, how he loathed this weary Indian exile to which he as yet saw no end. He felt almost as if his battle of life had been fought, and he had nothing left him but to drag himself sore stricken out of the fray. Annie, his good name, position—all were gone. He stood silent some minutes after the song was finished, but Mrs. Davenport interrupted him never a word. Like a true artist she appreciated this mute acknowledgment of her powers very far beyond the conventional “Oh, thank you’s!” “How delightful!” etc. She saw his lip twitch, and knew that his thoughts were far away. She perceived that she had touched some chord connected with his trouble, whatever it was, and once more she felt curious about the reason of his presence in this country. Lizzie knew enough of the ways of soldiers to know that men don’t as a rule leave the

light cavalry for infantry in India except under extreme pressure.

“What has driven Cis Calvert here?—play or a woman,” thought Lizzie with a toss of her worldly little head. “And I mean him to tell me which before the month’s out.”

“Shall I sing you anything more, Captain Calvert?” she asked at last. “I am afraid my mournful ballad has leavened you with its own spirit. I ought not to have chosen it, but I had no idea that it would have so depressing an effect on you. No, don’t thank me; your silence was more eloquent than anything you can say. Do you know this?” and Mrs. Daventry dashed off into Kenny’s charming ballad of “Why are you wandering here, I pray?” to which she gave plenty of point and archness.

“What a magician you are,” said Cis, as she finished. “Yes, you can bring tears into our eyes, or charm the blue devils away from us as you list. I’ll not compliment

you further than saying, whatever Mrs. Daventry says she can do, I for one shall devoutly believe in for the future."

"I am really pleased to sing to you. I am so sick of the conventional compliments on my performance. To see that you have made any one feel," said Lizzie, with an expressive glance of her dark eyes, "is a triumph for any songstress."

"I am indebted to you for the one pleasant evening I have passed in this country," rejoined Cis; "and now, Mrs. Daventry, I think it is time to say good night. The matutinal habits of India are unholy in the extreme; people are all afoot before my late comrades had gone to bed. It's healthy, I know, to lay kicking at and cursing mosquitoes, but I can't help wishing the Royal Dunbars kept their whist table going an hour or two later."

"Going to bed early don't suit you? I suppose you haven't got into it as yet."

"No, indeed. I've tried hard to break

myself into the habits of the East, but retirement to rest at eleven is usually productive of rising at one and smoking a cheroot with a view to produce sleepiness. But go to bed early or go to bed late, I'm always sleeping the sleep of the just at gun-fire, and feel tempted to strangle that miserable malefactor who, under a pretence of being my servant, calls my attention to the fact that the dressing bugle has gone."

"Ah, I dare say it does come hard. I was broke into it young, and then we women are not so conservative in our habits as you. We have more adaptability. But remember one thing, you have broke the ice, Captain Calvert, and at last cast aside the hermit's robe. I hope we shall see more of you in future, and further bear in mind, that I am 'at home' always on Wednesday evenings, and that when your rubber dies out at the mess of the Royal Dunbars you will always find one here on that night. Neither Hugh nor I are given to lengthy

slumbers ; four or five hours always suffices for me, though I plead guilty to persistently indulging in what some people call the fatal habit of the siesta—rubbish ! as if it was not common to all the sun countries. Good night.”

Cis clasped his hostess’s little palm and made his reverence, and then having shaken hands with Daventry and Wrotsley, and made his adieux to the Cornwallises, swung himself once more into the saddle and cantered home.

Arrived at his own bungalow, he proceeded to mix himself a bucket of soda and brandy, then lighting another cheroot, sat himself down after the manner of solitary man to think over the events of the evening. Yes, Mrs. Daventry was very different from the woman he had expected to see ; he had pictured her a showy, affected woman, full of airs and *agaceries*, betraying an unpleasant consciousness of her charms, with a mouth filled with foolishness, and eyes

that challenged all male creatures to flirtation, and he was fain to confess there was not the faintest trace of the vulgar beauty of his imagination about Mrs. Daventry. She was undoubtedly a very pretty woman, but anything more unaffected and unconscious than her manner it was impossible to conceive. When she said she *could* sing there was no trace of her being vain of that accomplishment. She stated it as a fact too well established to make a fuss about, just as a man of established position never manifests any anxiety concerning it, and she had certainly good warrant for what she said. Cis could not but admit that he had never heard sweeter ballad singing, and he had thought Miss Aysgarth highly gifted too in that way. The studied simplicity of her dress too was perfect; but one of the great attractions she had for men was, that under her soft caressing manner she permitted them to divine that she was unhappy, that she was not understood. It

was this lent such magical charm to her music.

“The anguish of the singer made the sweetness of the strain.” Ah, how many men have succumbed to these misunderstood women, the titillation to their vanity is so irresistible ; they pity the lady, and think the husband a brute in the first instance ; gradually it is insinuated to them that their society affords some consolation ; had they only met when she was free ; from that to ‘kindred spirits,’ and the final catastrophe, is but a step, and the *dénouement* is generally in the hands of the lady ; with her it rests whether the fly within the meshes escape with scorched wings or two lives are ruined.

Do not suppose for one moment that Cis Calvert had any wild fancies of this nature. He only thought that Mrs. Daventry was a very charming woman, who sang very sweetly, that it was a house it would be a relief to drop in at occasionally, and so

break the deadly monotony of this Indian life. As far as his slight experience of society in the great Asiatic peninsula went, he had been most unfavourably impressed until to-night. He had found neither social nor feminine attraction in Secunderbad so far, and if he had turned hermit it was because the solitude of his own bungalow was less depressing than the mild revelry of the station. As he had told Mrs. Daventry, his sole distraction in the evenings was whist, and the whist players of the Royal Dunbars retired betimes. The tossing feverishly on your couch, with a mind thronged by ugly memories, while listening to the war-horn of the mosquito, is a sorry time to look forward to, and so badly did Cis sleep that he quite dreaded going to bed. Again and again to him came that miserable vision of Crymes carrying off his betrothed, or rather she who had been his betrothed, even as he had carried off the Cup ; for despite a sweet love-letter,

in which Annie told him nothing could make her believe him anything but innocent, and that she was still his whenever he deemed it right to claim her, Cis persisted in considering her free. No man, he held, with such stain on his name was justified in asking a woman to marry him.

At last with a weary sigh Cis threw the end of his cheroot out of the window and proceeded to seek his pillow.

CHAPTER V.

A CRITICAL SITUATION.

“WELL, Lizzie, what do you think of this .
excessively shy fish I only succeeded in
landing last night, though I’ve angled for
him some little time?” inquired Major
Daventry, as he and his wife sat at
breakfast.

“He’s well enough,” she rejoined, languidly ; “but I don’t think he will be much
use to you, whatever he may be to me. I
may find him pleasant to ride or dance
with ; but I don’t fancy he’s any taste for
cards, except in the shape of a quiet rubber.”

“Taste of that nature sometimes only
requires a little development, besides, it was

a gambling business of some kind brought him out here. Those bitten of the game-cock seldom overcome the fever."

"No, indeed," she rejoined, bitterly, "I can testify to that."

"Ah, well, I don't think we shall trouble you for any evidence on the subject just at present. Will you be good enough to remember that I want the house made pleasant to Calvert. I needn't caution you not to over-do him with invitations just at first, because no woman understands better than you how to make a man thoroughly at home in her husband's house;" and the sneering tones in which the speech was delivered were enough to goad a better woman than Lizzie Daventry to practical reprisal.

"I shall do, of course, what you bid me," she replied, in her soft even voice. "If I have no other virtue, I may certainly claim to be an obedient wife. At your behest," she continued, with an inflexion of sarcasm

in her tones, "I have broken half the laws of the decalogue."

"And transgressed the other half, most probably, for your own satisfaction," rejoined her husband, brutally. "Remember what I have told you. I wish Calvert to be intimate here ; if he can't be useful to me in one way he may in another. He's worth making a tame cat of if only for his jockeyship. There'll be races got up here in the cold weather, and first call of a good man will be worth money. You do understand a race when you see it, and you know how very few of the gentleman jockies in this country have any idea of riding. I'm off to the office ; don't forget."

For a few minutes she sat motionless, then rose and paced the room restlessly.

"If I'm not a good woman," she murmured, "surely I may plead in palliation that I was married as a mere child to a man like that."

Calvert, in common decency, could not be

long before he called upon the Daventrys. Her own inclination coinciding with her husband's instructions upon this occasion, Lizzie exerted herself to please her visitor, and few women when they chose had more fascination of manner. What wonder that the visit was somewhat prolonged; what wonder it was speedily repeated! To Cis, sore from his downfall in England, and utterly bored with such Anglo-Indian society as he had hitherto met, such a house as the Daventrys' was an elysium, while sympathetic Mrs. Daventry was a solace to a wounded spirit past all compare.

The cantonment began to talk,—it does not take much to set a station gossiping in the East,—and speedily it was whispered about that Calvert was gazetted first aide on 'the Daventrys' staff.

That Lizzie should have her circle of adorers was an acknowledged thing concerning her, and whenever the appointment of senior aide-de-camp was vacant there was

much curiosity manifested as who should succeed to it.

Cis had gradually dropped into this position. He generally rode with her, was often her escort to this, that, or the other entertainment, when duty or caprice prevented Major Daventry fulfilling that obligation. He was now an *habitué* of the house, constantly dined there, and rarely missed one of Mrs. Daventry's Wednesdays.

That what's called a little gambling went on upon these latter occasions was undoubtedly true, and that no more pernicious house for a young man could be possible in an Indian station equally so.

The Major took exceeding good care that such play as there was should be kept within moderate bounds; but these moderate bounds were quite high enough to suck the life blood out of the ordinary regimental officer. A steady abstraction of so many ounces of blood a day kills quite as surely as the severance of the jugular. Still, as

far as Cis was concerned, he was not hurting himself at cards, nor, although Secunderabad believed the contrary, was he at all in love with Mrs. Daventry ; and what was more, that lady was quite aware of the fact.

It piqued her not a little. She was so accustomed to see men yield to her fascinations almost at first sight, that her conquests for the most part interested her but slightly. There was a novelty in this man who courted her society, who was ever willing to dangle by her side, but who never made love to her ; it was altogether a new experience, and it provoked her. She was used to see men's faces flush at a few soft words from her lips, and knew she had power to make the blood surge wildly through their veins at will ; but she was fain to confess that she did not believe Cis Calvert's pulse quickened one beat in the minute at her presence. He was kind, courteous, devoted ; but Lizzie knew, as women instinctively do know, that he was

not in love with her. She quickly drew her own deductions. She had never yet failed to conquer when she had pleased to exert herself; more usually her victims were at her feet without any trouble on her part. There was but one thing could steel man's heart against her attractions, and that was his love for another woman; and when she had arrived at this conclusion a smile wreathed Lizzie Daventry's lips, and she vowed Cis Calvert should forget that woman in England before long. Of her own power to teach him such oblivion she never doubted. She had taught others before him as mere matter of caprice. She was in the very zenith of her beauty, just entering her twenty-ninth year, and might well feel justified in believing that no man could be long insensible to her charms whom she set herself in earnest to subdue.

"Ah, my dear," she murmured, with a scornful little laugh, "I don't know who you are as yet, though I shall before long ;

but though you were first in the field you are many thousand miles away now, and Lizzie Daventry has yet to find a man who can remain at *her* side and be constant to a memory of days that are gone. We shall see."

The days slipped by, and Calvert might be almost said to live at the Daventrys'. There was much talk about his extreme intimacy there in the cantonment; but still it didn't affect the lady, as is sometimes the case.

There are men and women to whom society concedes the privilege of trampling the conventionalities underfoot, as there are others whose slightest deviation from propriety's grooves is visited with prompt retribution.

Lizzie Daventry belonged to the former class. For years she had been talked about. She had always some one as devoted as Cis Calvert at her back, and had at last quite established it as a concession she required

from society, that she should be allowed a cavalier *servente*. Still, for the first time in all her experience Lizzie found that post filled by a man who was not in love with her. Some weeks had elapsed since she had made up her mind to effect Calvert's subjugation, and Mrs. Daventry was fairly nonplussed to find all the artillery of her fascinations powerless. She felt that this man was a loyal friend, an admirer even ; but a lover—no. “But he shall be,” she would whisper to herself sometimes, almost fiercely, as her anger rose at Cis's insensibility.

Did he but know it, Cis Calvert was never in more grievous jeopardy than at the present. A beautiful capricious woman, passionate, untrammelled by principle, and used to the gratification of her every whim, is doubting whether she loves him or hates him ; but is at the same time very resolute that he shall in any case be made to love her.

When a woman has this feeling towards a

man it can end only in one way—passionate love ; and if the man fail to respond to that, it were well for him that he should put thousands of miles between them as soon as he becomes conscious of her preference. Byron's line is too hackneyed to quote ; but 'a woman scorned' is no doubt dangerous, and likely to work the culprit's undoing if it lieth in her compass.

Mrs. Daventry had come in from her ride one afternoon, with Cis as usual in attendance, and as matter of course he followed her to the drawing-room for a cup of tea. Whether Cis had shown some signs of developing into the lover, or whether her own feelings were getting more involved than she was quite aware of, who can say ? but Lizzie suddenly was seized with an irresistible desire to, in nautical phrase, take soundings. She determined to see as far as might be possible what impression she had made upon this man's heart. The siege had been carried on now for some weeks with

much persistency, and she thought it time to take stock of the results.

Taking off her hat, she cast herself wearily on one of the lounges in the drawing-room, and said,

“I feel so tired, though I am sure I don’t know why. I am going to reverse the usual order of things, and ask *you* to give me some tea.”

“Of course ; sit still and rest, I’ll do all the tea-making business. You overrate your strength and do too much. Do you know I sometimes think you have been too long in this country. You should take a run home to England.”

“England !” she retorted. “Do you know it’s ten years since I left home a mere girl ? Do you think, in the words of your favourite song,

‘I’d find one face, lad,
I loved when all was young ?’

No, Cis, I had few friends or relations, and made a run-away match from a Brighton

boarding-school. What would I do in England, even supposing my lord and master consented to part with me?"

"But Daventry would never hesitate a moment if he thought your health was at stake."

"Not a second," she replied, dreamily. "If he wanted me out here I should be bid stay—if deemed in his way I should be sent home."

"I don't think you do your husband justice. I'm sure he allows you to do pretty much as you like."

"In some points, yes," she replied bitterly. "I've unlimited licence for flirtation, and if I ran away altogether I don't think Hugh would be very much put out. Only you men are so blind, you might see what I mean."

Cis made no reply, but gazed at his fair companion in mute astonishment.

"Ah, you don't comprehend. You should understand something about women too by this time, Captain Calvert. You may beat

them and ill-treat them; you may hate them and let them know it; but you may love a woman though you ill-use her,—and hatred may be born of love,—and as long as she believes in the existence of that she will forgive much. There's one sin against her she never forgives, and that is indifference."

The conversation was getting embarrassing, and Cis felt that it was so, but he was not quite a neophyte in these matters, and his answer might have been counted diplomatic by a past master.

"So you may say," he rejoined quietly; "but as you can never have been called upon to deal with it, you can hardly be considered an authority on that point."

"You can never conclude a married woman is not," she retorted quickly. "Ah, well, you see an end to this dreary existence. You are not destined to stay much longer in this land of eternal gossip and sun—a slanderous land, where it is difficult

to say if the scandal or the weather is served out to us hottest. I should know," she continued in a low voice, "for they have whispered evil of me for years, from Peshawur to the Deccan."

"Pretty women are always talked about," replied Cis, "and I don't know that there is much more scandal afloat here than at home. If the women weren't jealous of your good looks, recollect, they wouldn't talk about you."

"You will be very glad to return to England, I suppose," she suddenly observed.

"I don't know. I have never thought about it. Why?"

"Why? Surely you know the Royal Dunbars cannot have much longer to serve in this country. They have been out so long that they are the subject of innumerable jests—are said to be mislaid by the authorities, and their whereabouts not even known at the Horse Guards; that they were in reserve at Plassy, and have

been in reserve ever since. They will go home next year in all probability."

"Do you know, I never thought of that," said Cis slowly. "When I exchanged, my one idea was to get out of England, and to collar as much money as I could on the transaction."

"Ah, yes, I never asked you, but of course I knew you exchanged out here on account of a scrape of some sort. Money, was it? I have sometimes thought it might be the other."

"The other—meaning—"

"Quite so," interposed Lizzie, laughing; "difficulties feminine or difficulties financial seem to be, if not the whole duty of man, the only one he devotes himself to getting into with any sort of energy."

"No," he replied, speaking in somewhat dreamy fashion, as if more to himself than his companion; "money was the least part of my scrape, though it had something to say to it. I'll not bore you with the wretched

story ; suffice it to say, I sank under a charge which, though powerless to disprove, I was perfectly innocent of. The regiment as a whole stood by me like men, but it was no use, appearances were too strong, and public opinion undoubtedly against me. I bent to the storm and left England ; it was better to do that than wait to be cut."

"You were wrong," she said quickly. "Face it boldly, and one can live down a scandal, even if it be true."

Odd, he thought ; in the one letter he had received from Miss Aysgarth since he had left York she had expressed much the same opinion.

"You say so now, but you'll perhaps hear all about it some day, and drop me in consequence."

"Never, Cis," she replied. "You know me better. I have plenty of faults, no doubt, but I am staunch to my friends."

Mrs. Daventry's detractors, and they were pretty numerous, would probably have

suggested an amended reading to this speech, and phrased it thus:—"Staunch to her lovers till she wearies of them."

"You think so now, but you may be more hardly tried in my case than you think for."

"As if that would signify. When a woman believes in a man she does it with all her soul. She will credit nothing to his disparagement. Will you tell me one thing?"

"What is it?" he inquired curtly.

"Had a woman anything to say to this scrape of yours?" she answered, in a low voice, though the quick anxious look she shot at him from beneath her dark eyelashes showed she was by no means indifferent to the reply.

"No; the money part which aggravated the business was of my own making, but for the rest it was a sheer caprice of fortune."

"I don't believe him a bit," thought Lizzie.
"I can't go any further just now, but I put

my question badly. She wasn't perhaps the cause, but there was a woman mixed up in it all I'd stake my pet arab to a mango."

"Ah, well, you will go home next year, and twelve months buries most social iniquities. I shall miss you terribly, and you perhaps may send me one little line from the Cape."

"No, I don't think that '54 will see me home again; if the regiment gets its orders for England I shall probably exchange again."

"Why, what should keep you out here?" and the wicked dark eyes flashed subtle provocation to the answering of that question. She was looking her best she knew, and a tithe of the encouragement she had just given had brought most men to her feet so far. But instinctively as she felt she had a rival in the background, she could not know how unhappily timed was her attack. There had suddenly come across Cis a recollection of that other afternoon

when he had ridden home to The Firs after the day at Askham Bog, and had tea with Annie Aysgarth. She too had been in her riding-habit, and her frank honest manner offered a severe contrast to the somewhat meretricious bearing of his present companion. He liked Mrs. Daventry much. She had been very kind to him since he had made her acquaintance, and lightened his lonely life no little ; but at this minute he had one of those clear glimpses into the truth that are vouchsafed most of us now and again. He saw the difference between the gold and the dross, between the pure honest love of a maiden and the capricious fancy of a coquette. For if not one whit in love with Mrs. Daventry, it could scarcely be supposed Cis was unaware that he was embarked in a strong flirtation with her ; that the station indulged in tolerably strong comment on this little affair he might also be pretty certain of did he ever take the trouble to think about what his world might

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say ; but concerning that Cis was sublimely indifferent, and yet heaven knows he should have been aware, if any one ever was, how tongues can wag to a man's detriment.

He remained silent for some minutes, his memory still busy with that scene in the fire-lit drawing-room at The Firs. Lizzie, watching him closely from beneath her drooped eyelids, bit her lip with vexation at seeing how little hold she really had on his feelings. She recognized that his thoughts for the moment were far away, and it was precisely one of those moments when it was a slight past forgiveness to be engrossed with anything but the woman at his side. A change came over Mrs. Daventry's face, the dark eyes that a minute before had gleamed with softened languor now sparkled with anger, and though she strove hard to suppress it there was a slight acerbity in her voice which aroused Cis from his reverie as she remarked—

“ I little dreamt the attractions here were

so numerous that they required thought to catalogue."

"Ten thousand pardons ; but my thoughts were wandering. You were saying—"

"That I am very tired and you very tiresome, Captain Calvert. I dare say half an hour's sleep before dinner will put me all to rights. Good night. If you have nothing to do come and have tiffin with us to-morrow."

Cis pressed his hostess's hand and accepted his dismissal without remark. He was accustomed to her moods, and not without experience of such curt *congé*, and it certainly did dawn upon him as he rode home that he was getting entangled with Mrs. Daventry in a fashion he had never contemplated. He had not in the least lost his head, I suppose I should say heart, but the former in these matters when of irregular nature is perhaps the more important factor of the two ; still Cis knew there were occasions when the march of events and a reckless

woman may snatch the reins out of one's fingers, and the coach of our destiny crash down-hill uncontrolled by either drag or driver. He had no belief that Mrs. Daven-try's regard for himself was anything more than a caprice of the moment, but he did know that she had not only no affection for her husband, but that she both feared and despised him, if two such sentiments are compatible. To despise what we fear seems scarcely possible, and yet there are times when the sense of terror seems so lulled to rest, that contempt for the cause of it may become the master-passion of the twain.

CHAPTER VI.

MRS. CHARRINGTON'S ADVICE.

THERE are few old saws so true as the expression 'a nine days' wonder.' Verily in these times you must have astonished the world to considerable extent if it holds you in memory for a fortnight. The pace gets faster and faster, and whether you paint pictures, compose poetry, write books, steal plays or act them, play the fool politically or æsthetically, if you don't, so to speak, pose continually before the public you will most assuredly find yourself forgotten. In '53 the great movement for the elevation of the masses, and the corresponding increase of ignorance in the

middle class, had not as yet begun. That smattering of all the 'ologies,' that affectation of knowledge of everything and solid knowledge of nothing, had not yet commenced. That getting of learning through the medium of epitomes is scarce conducive to solid acquirements.

The spring of '53 has passed away, and the triumphs of West Australian at Newmarket and Epsom have effectually driven all recollection of that luckless race at Crockey Hill out of the heads of York and its neighbourhood. Still the exile, you may be sure, is not forgotten at The Firs, nor have his old comrades of the Lancers ceased to talk about him. Tim Murphy, much exercised by Blundell's taunts, has, after making some unsuccessful inquiries on his own account, carried his story to Harry Harperley, and that young gentleman, with a wise discretion, has in his turn told the tale to Mr. Charrington. The master of Byculla Grange, who had already formed a

pretty correct idea of the true state of the case, seized upon the clue thus furnished him with avidity, enjoined close mouths upon both the Cornet and Tim Murphy, and then set himself to work to prove Calvert's innocence. Not even to himself would he have admitted it, but it may be questioned whether Mr. Charrington did not look forward a little to convicting Crymes of being aware of The Mumper's identity some time before the race. That Blundell, the Major's groom, had known it Mr. Charrington had no doubt; Dick Hunsley had admitted that he had backed The Cid in accordance with such knowledge, regarding the race as made pretty well a certainty for one of the two horses, and that it was within his power to disqualify the black should he prove the better of the twain. If he could only get at this mysterious Isham Boggs, Mr. Charrington thought he should then be in possession of every detail of the robbery—a robbery of which there could be no moral

doubt that the Major's servant was cognizant of, whatever his master might have been. But Mappin, to whom he went in the first place for information, could tell him no more than he had told Cis Calvert some months before, to wit, that he had never heard of him. Then Mr. Charrington made personal inquiry at the Punchbowl, but he did not take much by that investigation. Yes, they knew Mr. Boggs ; he stayed there at times. Where was he now ? They didn't know. When was he likely to be there again ? They didn't know. In fact, further than that Boggs existed, and had a palpable entity, there never seemed living creature of whom it was more impossible to get knowledge.

But the ex-Indian officer had not dedicated the best part of his life to wringing the truth from the subtle double-dealing Asiatic without becoming cunning in ruses and crafty in cross-examination. He remembered while the controversy raged hot, that

at the York Club some one had said that Bilton, the great Leeds bookmaker, had told him he was backing the wrong horse, when he, Bilton, accommodated him with the odds against The Cid, and that the ring generally seemed inspired with the conviction that The Mumper would win, and rather peppered the grey in consequence. Putting things together, Mr. Charrington came to the conclusion that the shadowy Boggs had probably played prophet on that occasion, and inspired the leading bookmakers to lay hotly against The Cid. A little thought enabled him to remember who it was that Mr. Bilton had made that remark to, and he easily persuaded the gentleman in question to write to the bookmaker and inquire if it was from a person named Isham Boggs that he had derived his information, and further, who and what was Isham Boggs. Mr. Bilton's reply was soon to hand. He answered the first question in the affirmative; and as to the second,

said that Isham Boggs was reckoned about the cleverest tout in England, that he believed he had some rather queer stories attached to his turf career, but they were mostly before his, Bilton's, time. Further, he indicated no suspicion that the information furnished him by Boggs had not been given in perfect good faith, nor did he offer any opinion as to who the concoctors of the robbery might be.

Mr. Charrington felt that he had not advanced his case an iota by this last move, but he had come to the conclusion that there were three people who could prove Cis Calvert's innocence, and tell the real story of the race if they would; and it was further his opinion that any one of the three would do so for a consideration. These were Boggs, Hunsley, and Blundell; but the first two had disappeared, and Mr. Charrington reflected ruefully that he could not well either bribe or cross-examine the servant of his intimate friend Major Crymes.

Still, though Boggs and Hunsley might be difficult to find, with their tastes it was only a matter of time. The hangers-on of the race-course rarely take to any other vocation, but adhere to their calling pertinaciously, despite the very indifferent living it furnishes them with at best, in spite of its cruel vicissitudes ; and no man knew this better than Mr. Charrington. Whatever misfortune may befall these men, even when it takes the form of being for a space of some years in what is euphoniously known as 'Her Majesty's keeping,' they gravitate back to the race-course as ducks to water.

There never was a man more qualified to make the most of winning cards than Horace Crymes. No one was quicker to recognize the turn of fortune in his favour than he, or to back it with more audacity. He had grasped at once all the advantage that luckless race had given him, and played his game since with consummate tact and

patience. He was rid by chance, he knew, of a most formidable rival, and had been specially careful never to let a syllable escape his lips to that rival's disparagement. He had more than once pointedly declined any discussion of what he somewhat ambiguously termed a painful subject, leaving his hearers on such occasions not quite clear whether he meant regret that duty to his backers should have required him to make that fatal objection, or that he was lamenting that an officer of Her Majesty's —th Lancers should have so sadly deviated from the paths of rectitude. With regard to The Firs, he had perfectly succeeded in keeping up his acquaintance with its inmates, at the same time being specially careful not to throw himself too much in their way just at first. To the banker he had more than once expressed regret at the line he had been compelled to take, but always hinted that his delicate position prohibited his expressing an opinion with regard to

Calvert's conduct. If he never accused Cis of fraud he most decidedly never upheld his innocence.

Julian Harperley had never been quite able to make up his mind upon this point. He still remained constant to the Scotch verdict of *non proven*, but he was quite decided upon another. He most earnestly desired that such engagement as there was between Cis and his stepdaughter should be considered cancelled, and in this he had been materially aided by Calvert himself. Not only had he reluctantly relinquished all claim upon Miss Aysgarth, but he had solemnly renounced the privilege of writing to her. He not only had called that letter written just previous to leaving York his last, but although sorely tempted by Annie's sweet, womanly reply to continue the correspondence, he had abstained. "No," he said, "I love her far too dearly to hamper her with the correspondence of a broken man. Somebody would get hold of it if we

exchanged letters, and that she should be known to still write to me would be flung in her face. You may be innocent of card sharpening, but while the world holds you guilty you are as a chimney-sweep to your friends, and blacken their hands whenever you cross palms with them. I have done the best I could for all who loved me in placing thousands of miles betwixt us. You would stand to me, my darling, if I called on you, I know ; but I'm not so mean as to take advantage of your loyalty."

It may be urged that knowing himself guiltless, Cis Calvert was inconceivably foolish not to stay and live down the accusation against him, but I can only remark that innocent people as a rule are usually so overwhelmed with sudden charges of this nature that they invariably display much less discretion than transgressors, who are, so to speak, naturally prepared for some uncomfortable explosion. Next we must remember that Cis had lost a very heavy

stake upon this race, and that the money had to be found immediately. A thousand or twelve hundred pounds takes some looking up when your income amounts to little more than half of it. Lastly, there was a bit of genuine chivalry in Cis's nature, and he shrank from involving his friends in his defence, nor could he endure the idea of the girl he loved being involved in his disgrace. Anything to save her. Thank heavens, their engagement had never been publicly announced, and if he departed silently to India, that he and Annie had ever been friends would be speedily forgotten. He was weak perhaps to take this view of the case, but men with plenty of sense have been overwhelmed by such scandals before now, and have made the mistake of restoring their troth to women who love them dearly rather than involve them in their own wrecked lives ; and the women, who would fain have stood by them as they might, have judged the situation more correctly.

Miss Aysgarth meanwhile might certainly claim to be a hardly-treated young lady. She is a good, plucky girl, loving Cis Calvert with all her heart, and ready to stand by him through evil report in any shape. On the first intelligence of the trouble that had come to him she had written him a loving little note, in which she had expressed her entire disbelief in all this accusation against him ; then she had received in her turn that letter in which, while protesting his innocence and unalterable regard, he had released her from her troth. She had replied to that in an epistle full of passionate indignation that people should be found weak enough to credit such foul scandal, and protesting against the idea of being absolved from her pledge.

“I gave myself to you for life,” she cried vehemently, “to share your sorrows as well as your joys. Do you think me so foolish that I did not anticipate there were no storms for us to weather—storms, dearest, which should

serve only to knit us closer to each other. One has burst upon us sooner than we dreamt of, and I claim my right to face it by your side. You did wrong, Cis, believe me, not to stay here. Ah, believe me, we are better judges than you on these points. No woman ever turns her back upon a scandal until she is quite certain it will overflow and drown her. I am afraid there must have been money troubles besides, or you would never have stole away without wishing me good-bye. Still, Cis, remember I am yours whenever you choose to come and take me, and I'll believe nothing they say against you, prate them ever so loudly."

When a young lady does not get an answer to such a letter as this she may be excused for feeling a little uneasy in her mind. Lovers now-a-days may doubtless carry their chivalry a little too far; and I have a hazy idea about Christmas time when mistletoe was about some quarter of a century ago, that when young ladies declared

they would scream if you *did*, they certainly put you down as a most unmistakable muff if you *didn't*.

It was all very well for Cis to release her, and to volunteer to drop all correspondence till his name was cleared ; but then he had no business to keep his word, and Annie had not been woman if she had not fully expected him not only to consider her still betrothed to him, but to let her know pretty frequently that he did so.

But this was just what her lover refrained from, taking credit to himself meanwhile for so doing, and the result naturally was, that Miss Aysgarth chafed a good deal over the ordering of things. Did she not believe thoroughly in her lover's innocence and constancy ? Undoubtedly she did, but still she thought that last letter of hers deserved an answer ; and moreover, although one may have no misgivings concerning one's betrothed's devotion, still it is comforting to know now and again that he is in the same

frame of mind. It was difficult to imagine Cis Calvert's morbid view of his misfortune; and Annie found it hard to account for the sombre strain of his letters to her brother. She was haunted with the idea that they none of them knew the whole truth, that Cis had kept back something, and, moreover, she was hardly satisfied with these messages in Harry's correspondence. Why did not the exile write direct to herself? No positive interdict had ever been placed on their writing to each other, although Julian Harperley had certainly said that he thought it would be better all that sort of thing should cease, and Miss Aysgarth had told her father thereupon that things had gone too far; that she could not desert her lover in his trouble, and that she must write if she were written to; but then this last as yet had not come to pass. No wonder Annie Aysgarth felt her love-affair was running a little askew.

It is a gorgeous July morning, and Horace

Crymes is lounging in Mrs. Charrington's own sanctuary at Byculla Grange, a luxuriously furnished boudoir off the drawing-room, with a large French window opening on a prettily laid-out garden. The Major has just returned from the battle-field of Ascot, and has so far little to complain of in the year's racing campaign. He has identified himself for the present with Yorkshire, and in common with the county generally had a rare turn over the triumph of the 'all black' at Epsom, and has done no harm at the royal meeting to boot. Great days for 'the tykes' were those when Malton and old John Scott culminated in taking the classical triplet, last coruscation of the great stable of the north, ere death claimed its veteran ruler.

"So you still think seriously of wooing the banker's daughter," said Mrs. Charrington, who was making pretence of busying herself with some embroidering. "Not a bad-looking girl, and will come to you with some-

thing comfortable in her hand, to say nothing of what there may be, as Mr. Disraeli terms it, 'looming in the future.' You might do worse, Horace."

"I have got to that time of life," rejoined Crymes, "when it behoves us to settle. I must, as you know, marry money; and if you give permission, really do not think I can do better."

"Oh, dear, yes," rejoined the lady, laughing; "I told you long ago I like to settle my admirers, if possible, in my own neighbourhood. But have you any reason to think you'll win Miss Aysgarth's consent?"

"Any girl is to be won by a man who has time and opportunity to serve him," rejoined Crymes, coolly. "When I beat Calvert in the Cup I virtually gained a bride as well. I'm not sure I didn't hint as much to her before we started, but that victory disposed of my rival."

"I'd not be too sure of that," said Mrs. Charrington. "I feel pretty sure there was

an engagement of some sort between them ; and she's just the kind of romantic girl to insist upon sticking to it in defiance of the advice of her people."

"Granted in the first instance ; but when she seldom hears him spoken of, and knows that he has betaken himself to the other side the globe for an indefinite period, that feeling will die out."

"It may, and when you consider that time has arrived, then, I presume, you intend to come forward."

"Just so, unless accident furnishes me with a favourable opportunity sooner. Luck so far has been on my side. Had Calvert won that race, as the hero of the hour and winner of a nice sum of ready money, he would have been hard to displace in Miss Aysgarth's good graces."

"Yes, Horace, I would not have given much for your chance under those circumstances."

"Exactly ! One of my maxims is never

to throw down my cards, but invariably play the game out, however much it may look against me. It has served me well many a time. There is another should be taken in conjunction with it—'Everything comes to him who knows how to wait.'"

"It may be so," replied Mrs. Charrington, thoughtfully, "and, to do you justice, I think you understand us better than any man I ever knew; but I don't think you have an easy task before you."

"Very likely not, but difficulties rather inspirit me than otherwise. By the way, it is possible you might do me a good turn."

"How so?" she inquired, with no little astonishment.

"Well, you doubtless have some Indian correspondents. You might ascertain for me what Calvert is doing. I have never been there, but scandal is pretty rife in the East, unless rumour belies it."

"Why, you don't surely expect to hear

that Captain Calvert is entangled with any woman out there ?”

“No,” replied Crymes, with a cynical smile, “I never expect to hear of any of my friends being in such grievous case ; but it is wonderful how often I am taken aback by intelligence of that nature.”

“I have told you I will help you, and if you really are in earnest your opportunity will come next month. We are going, as are the Harperleys and others of our friends, for six weeks or so to Harrogate. It will be easy for you to go to the same hotel, and that will give you every opportunity of prosecuting your suit. Not to flirt at Harrogate is to make yourself conspicuous ; to be really in the fashion you should have two or three affairs in hand at once, and as to conduct those without tangling the strings requires an audacity and delicacy, it is not surprising that scenes and situations are plentiful in the vicinity of ‘the Stray.’ Say you’ll join our party

and come, it will be sure to amuse you, and, as I said before, offer opportunities you will find hard to make elsewhere."

"Thank you very much," exclaimed the Major, rising. "I shall only be too charmed. You are a woman in a thousand," he added, in a low tone—"one who can take a disinterested interest in an admirer. I shall never forget it, whatever the result may be. Once more, adieu," and, pressing her hand warmly, Crymes bade his hostess farewell.

"Yes," murmured the lady, "he's very nice, and it would be very nice to have him settled in the neighbourhood. We should get on beautifully, and be dear friends always. I think, Horace, if I can manage it, we must wed you to Annie Aysgarth."

CHAPTER VII.

HARROGATE.

“ Though Shakespeare asks us, What’s in a name ?
As if cognomens were much the same,
There’s really a very great scope in it ;
For instance, wasn’t there Doctor Dodd,
That servant at once of Mammon and God,
Who found four thousand pound and odd,
A prison, a cart, and a rope in it.”

TOM HOOD is right. Shakespeare, you see, on which point he cannot be too sufficiently congratulated, lived before the age of advertising. It is all very well to say, “ The rose by any other name would smell as sweet.” Quite so ; but just call them pink tulips, and you’ll discover an astonishing difference in the sale, whether for good or evil no mortal can determine, for the

whim of the public on such points is a thing surpassing all human understanding. But if there is something in a name there is a good deal more in a water. I mean a medicated Spa water. You may drink them for gout, rheumatism, what you will ; but there is also a moral property in them. As the quaffing of the waters of Spa and Homburg tend to foster an inclination for backing the colour or speculating on the spinning of a ball, so do the springs of Bath, Cheltenham, or Harrogate encourage the disseminating of scandal and all manner of evil speaking.

After somewhat careful observation of the latter place, I agree with the pithy sum-up of a veteran stager who knew the town well—"It's the sulphur as does it." The system, you see, has to be purged somehow, and that gout, rheumatism, and all the ghostly brotherhood should exude under the influence of the springs in scandalous garrulity is a benign form of riddance

of one's ailments. Gossip in the pleasant little sanatorium runs high, as is natural. What would you have?—we have only to drink the waters, laze, as poor Mortimer Collins called it, and talk about our neighbours; and how can we talk about people whose history we don't know, unless we embroider. Harrogate, as a rule, displays commendable talent in this art, has been, indeed, noted for it the last hundred years or more. Smollet, in his *Humphrey Clinker*, does it justice on this point, and one wonders how many little differences that grand old common called 'the Stray' has seen settled on a summer's morning. One can picture many a pair of young bloods in their shirts, silken stockings, and buckled shoes, foot to foot and hand to hand, engaged in wicked tilting matches, brought about by *les beaux yeux* of Mistress Lydia, or the consequences of indiscreet tattling. The Irish adventurer was a great feature in all such places a century ago, if

we may trust the novelists of those times, and is probably still to the fore; but society has so enlarged, and the salient points of the Hibernian have been so rounded off, that he is no longer the prominent figure he once was.

Yet I heard a story of Harrogate within the last few years that shows the Irishman has not forgotten the traditions of his race. It is customary at leading hotels in such places as Harrogate, Scarborough, &c. to appoint a president who sits at the head of the table, and is supposed by courtesy to be invested with some slight authority as master of the ceremonies. That he is president of a pure democracy is, of course, palpable, and that such weight as he may carry must be due entirely to his tact and popularity obvious. At an hotel in Harrogate, goes the story, Mr. O'Bluster was raised to the throne, and at once proceeded to rule the Saxon with a rod of iron. Now there were, I say it with sadness, two pretty

contumacious English girls, who declined to bow down to the O'Bluster. That eminent Hibernian had probably detected covert discontent with his rule, and when, the night before they left, they petitioned for a last dance, sternly declined to allow the attendance of the professional pianist usually employed upon such occasions. In vain the young ladies pleaded ; the O'Bluster declared he should put down his foot upon this continual frivolity, and that this night his friend Mr. Malony had promised to give them a summary of the Irish question. The hilarity of the evening is supposed on these occasions to commence after tea, and that refreshment satisfactorily disposed of, the O'Bluster commenced arranging the chairs in the drawing-room for the convenience of the listeners to Mr. Malony's lecture. Once more was the Celt outraged by the Saxon, for in defiance of the dictum of their Irish president, one of these English young ladies seated herself at the piano and trilled out

the Manola valse, while, dreadful to relate, her sister had actually persuaded some one of her admirers to commit felony, treason, contempt of court, or whatever it may be termed, and dance with her to that music.

There are times when collapse of our authority startles most of us on account of its abruptness. Louis Philippe, perhaps in our days the most astonished man to discover the reins had slipped through his fingers and the horses had overturned the coach; but his bewilderment was a trifle compared with that of the O'Bluster. Should his authority pass without a struggle? Heaven forefend! Fiercely he demanded of the pianist that she should cease. She smiled sweetly, but played on. Angrily he called upon the dancers to stop their gyrations; they laughed lightly and continued valseing. He appealed to the community, and the elderly and infirm, whose bed-time hour had well nigh come, followed him into the lobby; but the younger and more

energetic scorned to succumb to 'Home Rule,' derided the O'Bluster, and had their dance out. The downfall of the president was complete, typical of the probable result of Irishmen ruling Ireland.

Very pleasant, however, is Harrogate when the gorgeous summer weather comes upon us. When Babylon is sweltering under a midsummer sun, and the paving stones remind one of the good intentions with which those nethermost torrid regions are flagged, it is good to lounge about 'the Stray,' and enjoy the balmy air of the highest table-land in England. There is nothing to do in Harrogate for which one cannot be too sufficiently thankful. Do we not leave the turmoil of Babylon, wherein we struggle for our bread, for rest? and are not pure air and nothing to trouble our minds sufficient for most of us? But for those restless beings who cannot understand the delights of pure, unadulterated indolence, and as a man of Skimpolian tendencies I pity

them from my heart, there are endless excursions to me made from Harrogate, ruins to be raved about, sights to be sung about ; still these are all superfluities. The genuine visitor goes in for health, indolence, the waters, and such mild amusement as may come to him without trouble.

Mrs. Charrington was very fond of a month at Harrogate. She affected the Queen's Hotel, where she played the great lady, turning up her aristocratic nose with much magnificence at the wives and daughters of the plutocracy from Leeds, Bradford, Manchester, etc., a demonstration which inspired these good people with no manner of awe whatever, and usually recoiled upon Mrs. Charrington's head, inso-much as the deference so ostentatiously claimed was apt to result in her barely receiving civility from what she contemptuously denominated 'the spinning women.' Manchester might be a little loose in its h's, and Leeds express itself with more emphasis

than grammar, but they were pretty shrewd in reckoning up their fellows. They recognized dollars, they recognized success, and they had all that sneaking reverence for a genuine swell so characteristic of a radical. Let him say what he will, the republican always grovels before a duke; but they didn't see Mrs. Charrington. Good family, perhaps so; but who was Mrs. Charrington, and what had Charrington done that she should give herself such airs? Every year did Mrs. Charrington come to Harrogate, and set up for being queen of the Queen's Hotel. Every year was her authority fiercely disputed, and every year did she declare that nothing should ever induce her to set foot in the place again. But the gossip, that curious panorama of humanity's weaknesses and scheming, which watering-place life affords, always attracted Mrs. Charrington back again, and then it suited her spouse admirably. He was close to home, quite handy for the York races,

could slip up to his friends on the moors for a turn at the grouse. People, too, in the year of grace '53, did not wander so far from home as they do now-a-days. Cook had not as yet inculcated his sublime scheme for the seeing of everything in Zoetrope fashion in the minimum of possible time. Railways were, though in use, still but half comprehended of the public abroad; the national instinctive hatred of the barbarous hordes generically described as Russia, but in reality the wandering nomads of Central Asia, who from time immemorial have swept westward like a torrent, had enlisted our sympathies in favour of the Turks. 'The sick man,' as the Czar Nicholas described him, might be sick, he might be 'coming up piping,' and all that sort of thing, to borrow the extinct *argot* of the prize-ring; but for all that he was apparently not so easy to be done with—not to be put out of the fortress of Silistria by any means for instance, and yet the Muscovite

could not be accused of being chary of life to attain that desirable consummation. There were wild politicians who even hinted that we might interfere in the struggle, at which our rulers were vastly amused. The idea of our interfering with anything after forty years of peace, coupled with the remembrance of that awful debt contracted in the early days of the century. Ah, the magnates who conduct our affairs are destined from time to time to be astonished at the manifestation of the national will running not rightly in accordance with the grooves those eminent legislators have prescribed for it; and though we may wonder now what on earth took us into the quarrel, it was unmistakably a war of the nation, not of the ministry. Still I fancy in the summer of '53 few people dreamt that the following spring would see us committed to the biggest war we had been engaged in since the famous death grapple with Napoleon in the Belgian corn-fields.

Mrs. Charrington had once more taken up her abode at the Queen's Hotel, and without any solicitation assumed the *rôle* of leading lady, patronizing some of her sisters from the manufacturing centres to a degree they found barely endurable. Why she, a fairly popular woman in her own neighbourhood, should make herself so unpleasant at Harrogate was singular; but the fact was, Mrs. Charrington never could divest herself of the delusion that it was a great piece of condescension on her part to dine at the *table d'hôte* and mix with the other visitors, instead of adhering to the dignified seclusion of a private sitting-room. In reality Mrs. Charrington, being perfectly aware that the sitting-room would be, if stately, insufferably dull, abandoned it for the more lively general table, but always cherished the idea that it was very gracious on her part to do so, and that the guests must be proportionately grateful for her goodness. People were more wont to entertain such notions in the

days of which I am writing than they are now. The astounding biographies which, from the slenderest facts, Mrs. Charrington was accustomed to construct regarding those with whom she mixed were always a source of much mirth to Julian Harperley and Miss Aysgarth, now also established at the Queen's Hotel. No sooner had she arrived at any new-comers' names and some two or three trivial details concerning them, than she forthwith presented her intimates with a florid picture of their lives, and though how ill-founded were her conclusions was matter of continual demonstration, that exercised no check upon her imagination.

Horace Crymes too had come over to Harrogate, doggedly bent upon prosecuting his suit with Miss Aysgarth. He had kept somewhat aloof from that young lady since the race, thinking it more politic to do so for a time; but he had remained on perfectly friendly terms with Mr. Harperley, and, as he well knew, had afforded Annie

no pretext for quarrelling with him. No one could accuse him of bitter denunciation of Cis Calvert ; on the contrary, he had kept rigid guard over his tongue in that respect, and the girl was perfectly aware of it. She had heard her father and many of his friends speak of how well the Major had behaved through the whole transaction, and even Harry, hot partisan as he was of his old captain, was fain to confess that Crymes was not to be numbered amongst Cis's accusers. The Major makes his advances with the utmost tact ; he is most deferential, and by no means too marked in his attentions to Miss Aysgarth, indeed, is studiously desirous that she should not suspect him of such design as yet. He has taken much counsel with Mrs. Charrington, and while pretending to act upon that lady's advice, is steadfastly playing his own game. He is by no means blind to the advantage of having that matron on his side, and still more keenly alive to the fact that she could be very awkward in

opposition ; but he is spared all anxiety on that account, for Mrs. Charrington always shows a disposition to provide for her favourites after the regal fashion of Catherine, 'Russia's mighty empress.'

"You are too cautious," said Mrs. Charrington to him one afternoon, as they lounged in the garden in front of the house.

The idea of having to chide Horace Crymes for being a laggard in love !

"You are, of course, a better judge than I can pretend to be ; but I don't think Miss Aysgarth has quite got Calvert out of her head as yet. Besides, you should certainly understand that, though it may be desirable I should get married, yet I am in no hurry to assume the yoke."

"Ah, yes, Horace ; and it will be terrible for me to part with such an adorer as yourself ; but then, you know, we must think what is best for you. To marry money speedily is, you say, imperative. Very well then, do it—you can ; well, you know, go

on adoring me all the same, and if you marry Miss Aysgarth will be always in the neighbourhood handy for the purpose."

Mrs. Charrington was somewhat in advance of her age, and a very practical woman. Such bold views of the relations of the sexes were not generally enunciated thirty years ago, though in these days in certain circles the theory of a species of staff is regarded as quite permissible for a married woman. It is perhaps less to be dreaded than the attachment of a single aide-de-camp.

"Remember, I start under peculiarly adverse circumstances. I have got to make her forget a previous lover, for there can be no doubt Calvert was that, and to further make her forget that it was I who brought him to grief."

"Yes, and it's just that last point that will give you trouble. You may supplant a lover in a woman's breast, and she will well-nigh forget him; but she will always

resent the having been arbitrarily deprived of one."

"Quite true ; but difficulties have always a fascination for me. But heaven preserve us, here is one of your wild acquaintances from Spindletown swooping down upon us—a weird and probably *h*-less matron. Forgive me, but I really have not courage to face the attack."

The lady from whom the dragoon fled in such affected terror was a perfect type of those dames from the manufacturing centres that so often discomfited Mrs. Charrington. A good, honest, homely woman, richly though plainly dressed now, but who could well remember 'the days when she went about in cottons and prints, when she and her husband had not so many shillings a week as they now had five-pound notes. She had neither *h*'s nor pretence, nor that quintessence of snobbism—ostentatious pride in her wealth. She had her carriage there, and Mrs. Charrington, who really knew a

pair of steppers when she saw them, had broken the tenth commandment grievously anent Mrs. Hopperton's bays.

"Can I take you out for a drive, Mrs. Charrington? I am going at four, and 'ave only got those Flirtington girls with me. As for 'Opperton, 'e was obliged to run into town to look after business."

Mrs. Charrington declines the invitation in somewhat stately fashion, which is utterly lost upon plump, good-natured little Mrs. Hopperton. That is the terrible part of it: she never can be brought to a sense of Mrs. Charrington's position, and instead of allowing herself to be patronized, treats the mistress of Byculla Grange with an easy familiarity that makes her almost snort with indignation, and amply avenges several ladies whom Mrs. Charrington's patronizing manner has reduced to a similar state of impotent wrath.

Four o'clock is rather the stereotyped hour at Harrogate for the afternoon ride or drive,

and at that time there is usually a tolerable muster of carriages and hacks in front of the hotel; true, perhaps many of these may be simply hired, but there are always a considerable sprinkling of people whose homes being near at hand bring their own coaches and cattle. Mrs. Charrington had re-appeared in hat and habit, and albeit on a somewhat large scale, the lady looked remarkably well in that attire; moreover, she could ride, and sat her horse like a horse-woman. This riding party was a pet organization of Mrs. Charrington's. It took place about every other day, and had been started especially to promote Major Crymes' suit to Miss Aysgarth, for these two and Julian Harperley made up the quartette, mounted on their own steeds, and all looking perfectly at home upon horseback. They were a rather more imposing party than was customary before the *porte cochère* of the Queen; while Crymes, sitting down straight and square in his saddle upon old

Cockatoo, was certain to bring feminine heads to the windows. That tall swarthy dragoon on his snowy handsome horse was such a figure as women love to gaze upon. Miss Aysgarth had somewhat chafed at this arrangement in the first instance, foreseeing that, in the order of things, Major Crymes would naturally fall to her lot as companion; but the Major's tact had quite done away with all repugnance on her part. He never alluded to the past, and though she knew that he had at one time bid fair to become a declared admirer he never trespassed on that *rôle* now.

They were sauntering through Knaresborough in indolent fashion when Crymes said quietly,

“Miss Aysgarth, will you allow me to allude to a subject painful in the extreme to myself, and about which you must doubtless have heard a good deal from your brother? He, I know, was very much attached to his old captain, and to this

minute cannot forgive my unfortunate share in bringing about his exchange."

"I think, Major Crymes, we had best not discuss the subject. I make no pretence but that Captain Calvert was a great friend and favourite of mine, and that I was very sorry indeed to hear that he had to leave on account of a fraud which he committed most innocently and unknowingly."

"Pardon me, you make a slight mistake to start with. Captain Calvert was not in the least obliged to leave, and had he been well advised would not have done so. To have refrained from making use of the information I received, and did not receive, please remember, until the race was over, would not only have been most unjust to those who had backed me, but might have exposed myself to the charge of connivance. That I should have lost my money goes for nothing—only the year before last a well-known owner of race-horses dropped some

thousands over the Cambridgeshire, for which his mare started a hot favourite, and the British public insisted upon it that he had made a very good thing out of the business. I don't want to lecture on horse-racing, but I do want you to admit that I had a very disagreeable business thrust upon me, and that I could do no other than I did."

"I am sure, Major Crymes, I have never even hinted such a thing. All those best qualified to judge, including my father, bear testimony in your favour on this point."

"That is quite sufficient," rejoined Crymes. "You may implicitly rely upon my not alluding to so sad an affair again."

He changed the subject immediately, well content that he had got that preliminary ice satisfactorily broken; he exerted himself to be amusing, and when the Major did that he was usually successful. A man of the world who had seen cities, come across many celebrities, a keen observer and

skilled *raconteur*, his shrewd comments and stories were worth listening to, and Miss Aysgarth, despite her prejudice, could not but admit that her ride had been pleasant when they regained the hotel.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MAN FROM MANCHESTER.

TIME slipped pleasantly away at Harrogate, and both the Charringtons and Harperleys were thoroughly enjoying themselves. The delicious coolness of the place was exactly the change the banker wanted, while as for Miss Aysgarth, she saw no reason to parade her troubles to the world; besides, her brother kept up a desultory correspondence with Cis, so that she was not altogether without news of him. It is true she did think sometimes that he was showing un-called-for generosity in the matter of refraining from correspondence. She knew that had he written to her she would have

answered his letters, let her step-father say what he would. He might feel bound to restore her troth to her, but was she not equally bound to refuse it. She could not help feeling at times that this lover of hers was carrying his sense of honour a little too far. Even Major Crymes had endorsed her opinion that Cis Calvert was wrong in not sticking to his regiment. Of course that little difficulty of finding money with which to settle his bets had not presented itself to her mind, though it had borne some share in his decision to exchange. Still Miss Aysgarth had fair grounds for good hope that things would come right in the end as regarded that love affair of hers.

The Charringtons were just the people to keep the Queen's Hotel alive, and though the lady's usurpation of authority and her husband's somewhat arbitrary manner produced occasional rebellion amongst the visitors, yet upon the whole they enjoyed a sort of popularity. Mrs. Charrington was perpetually

organizing picnics to see this place or that, while her spouse showed infinite tact in the starting of whist tables or the getting up of a quiet pool in the billiard-room. Then again there were county people who came for a few days of Harrogate, mostly known to Mrs. Charrington, and easily persuaded to swell her forces for the invasion of Fountain or Bolton Abbeys, to get up a dance for the yeomanry,—at this time out for their annual training,—or to engage in the charades or other diversions that energetic lady might devise for the evening's amusement; and if the sulphur wells bubbled, so did the scandal springs, and there was much throwing off of ailments both moral and physical.

Of course they didn't know it, but Mrs. Charrington and her immediate set enjoyed no more immunity than other people, and it was whispered amongst visitors from the manufacturing centres that Mrs. Charrington had been divorced once, and that if her present husband had not happened to be

endowed with scarcely credible obtuseness, she would ere this have been divorced twice.

“That poor Miss Aysgarth—handsome do you call her? good looking, my dear, is the very furthest I can go—had been engaged to one of the dragoons at York, who had turned out a card-sharper and had to fly the country; that black-browed Major is in the same regiment, these soldiers all hang together, you know, and I dare say the corps generally understand turning up the king. No, I’d let him alone as regards card-playing if I were you.

Crymes meanwhile continued to oscillate between his military duties at York and the pleasures of Harrogate, and we may be sure strove steadily to work his way into Miss Aysgarth’s good graces, and he was succeeding. I don’t for one moment mean that the girl had any feeling for him further than that he was a pleasant acquaintance, but he had undoubtedly established himself upon that footing, and did not despair of

changing it into something warmer in due course."

It was at this time there descended on the Queen's Hotel, in the person of a Mr. Fulsby, the self-made man from Manchester—a type which, however you may respect for their energies, become social enormities on account of their narrow-minded ignorance and arrogance. Mr. Fulsby was a loud-voiced man, firmly impressed with the belief that Manchester was 'the hub of the universe,' and that the rotation of the world depended in some not precisely to be explained way on cotton. There were two phrases for ever in his mouth—"Manchester won't have it, I tell you," and "I'm a self-made man myself, mind." No baron of a score of quarterings could have been more proud of his descent than Mr. Fulsby was of his want of it, but the peer would certainly have been much more chary of allusion to the subject.

Now that summer of '53 had brought

about one or two things that were much in men's mouths: there was, to begin upon, as far as our army was concerned, the first symptom of what, for want of a better term, I must call 'the great military revival.' The close of the previous year had seen England's mightiest warrior lain to rest in St. Paul's Cathedral, and there had dawned upon his successors that the magnificent parade army might be found a trifle under-armed and not altogether versed in the requirements of campaigning. The camp of Cobham, which made a charming lounge for fashionable London, and the tardy recognition that a rifle really was preferable to a smooth bore when it came to a bullet meeting its billet, was the result of these cogitations, and it is open to question whether some of our warrior chiefs of the bow and arrow school, who alternately thrash and are thrashed in South Africa, have as yet got much further in their military conclusions.

The second topic was the outbreak once

more of the eternal quarrel between the Turk and the Muscovite, and upon that subject the nation generally was at that time on a gentle simmer, eventually resulting in a boil that neither statesman, journalist, nor political quidnunc could foresee—none blinder perhaps to the possibility of this outburst of national passion than what may be designated the Manchester school.

To interfere with barbarians in their play, which usually consists in the murdering, plundering, ravishing, and torturing of each other, would hardly seem to be the business of civilized nations, except the barbarians were under their rule.

The reverse of this creed is at present in vogue, and the prevention of atrocities everywhere but within their own precincts the bounden duty of governments. Still whenever that undying feud between the Moslem and the Tartar shall be finished,—and finished shortly in favour of the latter it is bound to be,—the possession of the keys of Europe

may lead to rivers of blood, and a death grapple 'twixt the Teuton and the Slav.

It was that matter of jealousy about the keys of Europe, and that fine old traditional phantom called 'the balance of power,' subject to perplexing and perpetual variation as powers got out of one scale into the other and so destroyed all equitable equilibrium, that finally brought the western powers to the idea that it was their bounden duty to take part with the Turk as present comfortably impotent gaoler of Europe. The key of the lock in custody of one within the compass of knocking down by any of the community is naturally re-assuring with regard to liberty.

Now, further than that the chivalry of woman's nature impels her to take part with the weaker side, I can give you no reason, but certain it is, at that time—and if I again remind you I am talking of the year '53, the permanence and constancy of this quarrel must be my excuse for it—the ladies

mostly raised their voices in behalf of the Turk, while men of the Fulsby stamp, though deprecating war as a barbarous and antediluvian way of settling differences that ought to have been long obsolete, cast such sympathies as they had towards Russia, who as the stronger power would probably finish up the business to her own advantage speedily, and who, moreover, did a good export trade of her own in corn, and was not a bad customer altogether to Manchester. It may be easily guessed that Mr. Fulsby did not altogether suit Mrs. Charrington and her select circle. In fact, they all literally dreaded the advent of this vulgar, boisterous, and utterly irrepressible man in the drawing-room.

Mr. Charrington was for once in accord with his wife; he was intense in his likes and dislikes, and he positively loathed the man from Manchester. He shrank from his noise, and although Mr. Charrington was by no means deficient in gad-fly attributes

his sting fell utterly innocuous on the pachydermatous hide of Fulsby. That anybody could be hurt or offended at his plain-speaking I do not think ever occurred to this braggadocio child of the spindles, but for all that a Nemesis was awaiting him.

Fond as he was of alluding to the army as an expensive and useless encumbrance, and a thing that might be profitably reduced, if not altogether done away with, he still had a hazy idea that Horace Crymes might be an awkward man to air this theory before. The Major's swart handsome face and keen dark eyes would have made most men hesitate before they ventured on taking a liberty with him; and though Mr. Fulsby was in happy ignorance of them, there were two or three stories of what the Major had done when exasperated past endurance that most thoroughly corroborated that opinion.

One evening, whether it was his evil genius that prompted him, or whether he

had quaffed deeper of a peculiar brand of Irroy that he rather affected who shall say, but joining Mrs. Charrington's circle in the drawing-room, he found that lady expatiating on the cause of those dear Turks, and trusting that Europe would intervene in their behalf. They were called so in those days, although it has been the fashion to call them 'unspeakable' of late; what that may mean I never met any one able to interpret.

"Nonsense, madam," interposed Mr. Fulsby; "the idea of our interfering in the affairs of our neighbours, ridiculous! we have thrown all that nonsense on one side for good, I hope. Our business is to develop our trade."

"But I suppose you will admit that nations, like individuals, must shape their conduct by some ideas of right and wrong," exclaimed Miss Aysgarth. "They are surely bound to protest, even by force of arms, against injustice; and it certainly appears

to me that this quarrel is none of Turkey's seeking."

"What have we to do with other people's quarrels? If they must fight, let 'em fight. Trade don't develop that way; and if it wasn't for the absurdity of maintaining thousands of armed men in idleness there would be an end to war, not that there's any fear of this country being lugged into it. I'm a self-made man myself, but I know Manchester's opinion, and I tell you, ma'am, Manchester won't have it."

"Manchester's not England," observed Crymes, quietly.

"Not England, sir! Not exactly, perhaps; but I suppose you'll admit that Manchester is the mouthpiece of England."

And at that time I think Manchester was somewhat of that impression.

"Place in Lancashire where they manufacture cotton, isn't it?" rejoined the Lancer in his most imperturbable manner. "They're supposed to be rather judges of the price of

calico, but I don't think England looks to them for much further information."

Mr. Fulsby literally simmered with wrath ; there was an unmistakable smile on the faces of his audience at Crymes' retort.

"You rather underrate the power of trade, sir. Manchester has set its face against standing armies, and, mark me, as far as we are concerned, standing armies will cease to exist."

"Quite right," rejoined Crymes, blandly. "Didn't know Manchester had a standing army myself ; but if Manchester don't want it she's quite right to do away with it."

"You twist my words, sir," rejoined Mr. Fulsby, wrathfully. "I'm a self-made man myself, and can't argue with chaps like you, who woke to find your bread ready buttered for you ; but what Manchester makes up its mind to Manchester does, and I tell you she's come to the conclusion she don't want soldiers."

"But, Mr. Fulsby, the country will never

stand that," exclaimed Mrs. Charrington. "We shall never consent to do away with the army because you cotton lords consider it unnecessary."

"A useless incumbrance, madam, simply provocative of war," rejoined Mr. Fulsby tartly.

If this Utopian idea still clings to some people in these days, it is easy to imagine how much more it was the case in '53, when war had not been practically brought home to the mind of the nation for nigh forty years, and when some of the wilder theorists of the Manchester school were actually beginning to indulge in the idea of the millennium, of the lying down of the lion with the lamb, and all those other Arcadian views which mislead folks who cannot bear in mind the one fixed immutable fact, that human nature never changes, that this veneer we call civilization is mightily soon scraped off, and the noble savage, with all his grand throat-cutting instincts intact, lies

beneath. Civilized ! alack ! my setter, whose education has taught him not to rend sheep, is about as much civilized as his master, whose teaching bids him avoid rending men, and the inclination is probably more frequent in the man than the dog.

“ Well, Mr. Fulsby,” said Crymes, quietly, “ I happen to be a unit of that incumbrance of which you complain. I don’t profess to know anything about the cotton business, but any fool knows that a big war is bad for the trade of the country that goes into it. You’ve been kind enough to prophesy our disbandment ; I always like to reciprocate a good turn. Now listen to my words of inspiration. Before this time next year we soldiers shall be probably doubled in numbers, and that we are not thrice as strong will be cause for the nation’s regret ; before this time next year Manchester will have learnt she is not the voice of England, and England will be drunk with all the intoxication of having once more thrown up her

hat and stepped into the European prize-ring."

"You don't surely mean that?" exclaimed Mrs. Charrington.

"Indeed I do. Mr. Fulsby and his compatriots have very little knowledge of the temper of the nation, and a very exaggerated idea of their own influence. This sympathy with the Turks, about which I offer no opinion, is growing amongst all classes, and the emissaries of Louis Napoleon do their best to spread it. He knows what he wants, we don't, and unless the Emperor Nicholas, about the proudest and most obstinate potentate in Europe, gives in we shall find ourselves engaged in a big war before we know where we are."

"Ridiculous, sir!" exclaimed Mr. Fulsby. "You pooh pooh the power of Manchester," and the irate gentleman's eyes gave symptoms of starting out of his head. "A fig for your British army. Sir, I tell you as a self-made man—"

“For which you deserve twenty-one years penal servitude,” struck in Crymes, sharply. “Had you been begotten in ordinary fashion we might have pitied you ; but that you should have had the presumption to construct yourself should be avenged with the severest penalty of the law.”

For a few seconds Mr. Fulsby glared as a titter ran round the circle, then rising, looked as if about to hurl some furious retort at his assailant ; but the Lancer’s imperturbable countenance and tall sinewy figure perhaps rendered that hardly advisable, and with some muttered remark to the effect that personalities were no arguments, the man from Manchester made what might be termed a florid exit. If the retort was of the strongest it must be remembered that the provocation was great. To be told your calling is superfluous, and about to be done away with, is enough to produce irritation in the breast of man, let his vocation be what it may ; while that ostentatious vaunt-

ing that our prosperity is due to our own exertions is always likely to exasperate those who have either not exerted themselves or done so inefficiently. Most men who have done anything are, so to speak, self-made, but they don't brag about it.

"You hit too hard, Major Crymes," said Miss Aysgarth, as soon as she had mastered a strong tendency to laugh.

"Pardon me," replied the dragoon. "Mr. Fulsby is a man who comprehends nothing but the cudgel, while the arrogance of the tail of the Manchester school towards my cloth warrants retaliation on our part to the extent of our ability and opportunity. Besides, I most thoroughly meant what I said concerning their exaggerated idea of their power in the country. Their chiefs know better, but the mass of the Manchester party really believe they are the arbiters of English politics."

That Manchester is a power in the land, still representing as it does large manufactur-

ing interests, no one would dispute ; but it certainly does not claim for itself what it did in '53, when that famous triumvirate of quakers sped to the banks of the Neva, with considerable belief that their intervention might stay the impending war. Fancy the autocratic Nicholas foregoing his spring at the Moslem's throat on the intercession of an embassy from Cottonopolis. The last thirty years have dispelled a good many illusions regarding the brotherhood of nations and the decadence of the European prize-ring, things supposed to be quite accomplished previous to that pitching of 'the ropes and stakes' around Sebastopol.

If Miss Aysgarth had accused Horace Crymes of hitting hard, she nevertheless quite appreciated such hitting, as women always do when done in their behalf; and there could be no denying that Mr. Fulsby had been for some days now a vulgar, noisy, dictatorial bore. He was scarce likely to trouble them again while the Major's

sarcastic tongue was at their service, and in fact speedily took his departure, to which the ruffling of his self-importance had no doubt somewhat contributed. That Crymes was steadily advancing in Miss Aysgarth's good graces was transparent, so much so that the sulphur drinking throng already whispered it about as a settled thing; and further, were kind enough to pronounce it a very suitable arrangement, which, in their utter ignorance of all details concerning the pair, showed a large-hearted aptitude for arriving at an opinion past all commendation. But Crymes was no whit deceived by the apparent success, nor was his *ci devant* flame, Mrs. Charrington. He knew perfectly that he had as yet made no real progress with the girl, although it was a good deal to have established himself once more on a friendly footing with her; but to overstep that a hair's-breadth would be, he knew well, to undo all he had taken such pains to build up. No; he felt that he must wait

and trust to the cards once more turning up in his favour.

“You progress very slowly, Horace,” observed Mrs. Charrington as they strolled about the ‘Stray’ one morning; “but I cannot say I blame you. To push the siege more vigorously would only be to court defeat, and it is always better to avoid coming to the point until success is tolerably certain.”

“You are very good, and have so clear an insight into things,” returned Crymes. “News from India may serve my turn, or, on the other hand, news to India. The sulphur is in great blast this year, carrying an ounce or two more to the tumbler than usual, and consequently there is no saying what Harrogate may feel impelled to write or say. We live here in a glass-house, under the eyes of people, who, in very indolence, arrive at all sorts of preposterous conclusions concerning us. Whether they have assigned me to you or Miss Aysgarth, with which of

you my elopement is speedily prophesied, who shall say ; but to doubt that such rumours are current would be heresy to the old sulphur well. That amongst the crowds that come here many correspond with India there can be little doubt. Harrogate may do me a turn in that wise."

"Nobody can accuse you of not reckoning up every chance in your favour," returned Mrs. Charrington, laughing. "You remind me almost of Mr. Toodles in the play, who bought the doorplate engraved with the name of Thompson on the supposition that he might have a daughter who might grow up, and might then marry a man of the name of Thompson. Yes ; Harrogate may write, no doubt, to Secunderabad, and describe you as engaged to Annie Aysgarth ; but it's hardly likely to unless you bring it about yourself."

"If you cannot help me it is not to be managed," rejoined Crymes, moodily.

"And I most certainly can't. What is

more, I would not if I could. I'll do a good deal for you, Horace—even colour a bit in your interest, if you like ; but I'll not pen a deliberate untruth."

A curious illustration this of moral perception. Mrs. Charrington saw no harm in a little embroidery, nor even perhaps in the utterance of a pretty fib ; but she refused to place a deliberate lie upon paper. I can recollect a curious story illustrative of this feeling. An old friend of mine was retiring from the army under a warrant which allowed favourable retirement after certain service, conditional upon settling in Canada. The whole thing was an absolute fraud. It involved going out to the Canadas with a return ticket, applying for a grant of land, which was at once ceded you upon payment of a few shillings per acre, with the condition that a certain portion should be cleared—the grant was always in the back woods—within three years. You then presented yourself to the Governor-General with the certificate

of your purchase, obtained from him a certificate of your settlement in the country, and returned home by the next steamer, and obtained your retirement. As for the nominal acres in the back woods, you thought no more about them, and the required work not having been done in the three years, they again lapsed to the Crown. My friend went through the usual course, bought his acres, and then sought an interview with the Governor-General.

“Of course you mean to settle in Canada, Colonel S—,” said His Excellency, dipping his pen into the ink preparatory to signing the certificate.

“No, I can hardly say that,” rejoined the Colonel with some little hesitation.

His Excellency threw down the pen and said, laughing,

“You can hardly expect me to sign this when you refuse to say it represents your intentions.”

It was very absurd; but really the

Colonel's conscientious scruples stood in his way for that day, and it was not until he recalled that his military life, guided by the Queen's regulations, had been passed in similar frauds, that for years he had been compelled to frame every application for leave as 'upon urgent private affairs,' whether they meant a month's shooting, a week's racing, or a round of the theatres, that he bethought himself he might yield to one further military fiction. He did so next day, infinitely to His Excellency's amusement.

Mrs. Charrington's conscientious scruples were on a similar par, and it may be equally to be overcome on mature consideration.

CHAPTER IX.

“YOU MUST RIDE FOR US.”

To break adrift from the nets of Circe requires much resolve. I wonder how often men, conscious of the danger that surrounded them, have vowed to sever their bonds, and yet, unless aided by accident or the caprice of the lady, have found themselves powerless to throw off the gyves. Cis Calvert felt that his intimacy with the Daventrys was likely to end in trouble of some sort, and yet he did not see exactly how to withdraw from their house. He knew that the gentleman was an unscrupulous gambler; he knew that the lady, though wondrous fair, was an equally unscrupulous coquette, and yet he was on

such terms with the latter as made it very difficult to change the footing on which he stood with them. Partly from pique and partly from caprice, Lizzie Daventry had devoted herself in earnest to his subjugation, and Cis found himself installed as a favoured admirer with very little effort on his own part. Day by day the chain grew stronger, and he could no longer shut his eyes to the fact that he was almost Mrs. Daventry's avowed lover, and was gradually awaking to the fact that she could be a somewhat tyrannical mistress.

Conversation was apt to languish when the Major and his wife breakfasted *tête-à-tête*. The lady was scarce likely to provoke it, as she knew by experience the unpleasant tone it was likely to take. Her spouse was generally busy over his last night's card account, notes connected with money matters, and divers private businesses of that description, previous to going down to his office. He was one of those men who

find themselves settlers in Hindostan by compulsion, that is to say, they are so heavily involved to the native money-lenders that leaving the country becomes simply impossible to them, and the least hint of such a thing on their part would at once consign them to imprisonment, or would have done at the time of my story; quite possible to become a very grey-headed Sisyphus in trying to get rid of that ever recurring stone, the exorbitant interest-bearing bills of one's younger days.

“It is no use blinking the question,” said the Major harshly at last. “I must go for a *coup* over the races here next month. There's a bill to take up from Chowanders, and here's a pretty tidy account come in against you for dresses and fal-lals of one sort and another from Bombay.”

“Let me see it,” she remarked quietly, as she extended her hand.

He threw it across to her as he rejoined—

“I don't complain; we can't afford to look

poor, but eight hundred and sixty seven rupees is money, you know.”

“One can’t dress for nothing,” she replied, carelessly, “and you’d be cheaply out of it if that were all.”

“If there are many more you’d better not have them sent to *me*,” he said with a sneer. “You’ve friends, no doubt, who will see you don’t want for frocks.”

Her face flushed slightly at the insult, but she made no reply. She had some right to say she was what he had made her. From the first years of her marriage she had been the attraction of a gamester’s home, the lure to bring dupes to his net. She had been taught to play the game of flirtation as if it was *écarté*, and instructed that it behoved her admirers for the most part to keep her in millinery. Daventry preferred not actually to know that it was so, but that his wife’s admirers should settle her dress-maker’s bills was not likely to offend his sense of delicacy.

“Another thing,” he continued at length, “I shall want Calvert to ride for me. As it happens there are only some one or two fellows in the place who have any idea of jockeyship in reality, though there are dozens who think themselves within a few pounds of Frank Butler.”

“Well, why don’t you ask him? Surely that is your business, not mine. I don’t suppose he’ll make any difficulty about it.”

“But that is just what the confounded fool does do,” exclaimed Daventry, rising and pacing the room with impatient steps. “He says he has determined never to ride again, that he has got into such trouble about some race at home that he never means to have anything more to do with it. That’s what’s sent him out here, I suppose. It takes a real artist to pull a horse cleverly, and he probably stopped a favourite a little too transparently and feels as thoroughly penitent as the rest of us when we’re found out.”

"And you think that is what brought Captain Calvert to grief in England," she said slowly. "I doubt it; but any way if you want anything of that sort done out here I'd recommend you not to ask him to do it."

"What nonsense you talk," he retorted impatiently. "I want him to ride Red Ronald for me, the best 'waler' in the presidency. They'll put a stiffish weight on the horse as an Australian bred one, but I think he can give it to anything they have here."

"But if he has made up his mind to ride no more hadn't you better ask somebody down from Bombay."

"No," rejoined her husband shortly. "Woman's mission in this world is to upset man's resolutions. It will be for you to make him change his mind, and to the best of my belief you will find it not an uncongenial task. Be that as it may, remember I expect to hear that Calvert will be quite willing to ride for me if I want him, either

from himself or you in the course of the next two or three days."

"Of course I shall ask him if I am ordered to," she rejoined contemptuously.

"I must trouble you, madam, to do a little more than that," sneered Daventry, "namely, to exert your all-powerful influence that his answer shall be in the affirmative. Men don't usually say no to you when you plead in earnest."

"You at all events have slight cause to say so," she retorted sharply.

"No," he answered, laughing, "that is a necessary acquirement of matrimony; husbands who have not learnt that don't have a good time as a rule. For the present adieu, and don't forget," and so saying Major Daventry disappeared.

For a few seconds Lizzie's features wore a look of unutterable loathing. She could hardly have said whether hatred, contempt, or fear predominated in her feelings towards her husband. He had

ruthlessly broken down all womanly pride and self-respect in her breast, and he had done this simply by the jeering tyranny that he exercised over her. If there had been one thing she had dreaded in the early days of her married life, it had been her husband's jibing, mocking tongue; when the first noontide of their passion passed, she found her devotion ridiculed, her fondness derided. She said truly she was what he had made her: he had killed all honest affection in her, and taught her that a heart was an inconvenience both morally and physically; that it was the nature of the sexes to prey upon each other to some extent, and that flirtation was to be made profitable by the more enlightened of their generation; that admirers were a matter of course to every good-looking woman, married or otherwise, and that admirers should be expected to supply all such trifling superfluities as gloves, flowers, fans, &c.

Men found it costly to serve on Lizzie's

staff in these latter days, as her views of the superfluities got enlarged, including *bijouterie* and even riding-horses. Nothing very new about this theory of irregular taxation; it was understood as well in imperial Rome as it is in modern Babylon; there are some points the world varies very little about. Civilization may advance, but human nature never changes, and when that is sufficiently moved this veneer we call civilization seldom suffices to restrain it.

But one curious fact marked Mrs. Daventry's flirtation with Cis Calvert—she had never even hinted at a desire for anything from his hands, and concerning her wants and wishes, Lizzie was wont to be extremely candid with her admirers; and, little Bedouin that she was, Mrs. Daventry held that alone should tell Cis that her feeling for him was of a different kind from that which usually characterized her love-affairs. Calvert, unfortunately sauntering through a flirtation in which he was only half in earnest, never

even thought about it. He was so bored with this Indian life that he could not forego the society of the pleasantest woman in the station, and although quite aware that to be the accredited lover of a lady who is on very indifferent terms with her husband is equivalent to trifling with dynamite, he consoled himself with the idea that it would all come out right in the long run.

Lizzie mused for a little over her husband's behest. There could be no harm, she thought, in asking Cis to do that much for her sake, and rarely as she was accustomed to dispute her husband's commands, it may be doubted whether she would have obeyed him in anything that threatened to work woe to Cis Calvert. She was by no means sure that she was in love with him, indeed quite doubted her capacity for being in love with any man, would have probably remarked that she had done with all that nonsense long ago ; but she was clear, nevertheless, about two points, that Cis should

never receive harm at her hands, and that she could not endure the idea of his being in love with another woman.

Mrs. Daventry may not mean her admirer any harm, but there is the brewing of a cauldron of Hecate's own broth on these mixed feelings of hers.

There was little fear but what Calvert would call in the course of the day ; if he did not drop in for tiffin he was sure to look in before the evening ride or drive, in which he was now so constantly cavalier in charge. Some veteran *habitués* of the racket court, who took their exercise there steadily, and abjured all social allurements, marvelled much what had become of such a dangerous man in the left court as Captain Calvert ; but those more in the swim rapidly enlightened them, and told that converse of Hood's ' vagabond count '—

“How for hope of winning her tender regards
He'd cut cutting of balls, and the shuffling of cards,
And could be found all day in her pockets.”

And then there was much wagging of heads and sorrowful lamentation over another good man gone wrong, as is usually the case when feminine influence overcomes the attractions of the club or mess-table.

Cis dropped in as was usual to tiffin, and, singularly enough, happened to be the only visitor, for as a rule that meal at the Daventrys' was generally invaded by a considerable sprinkling of idlers, the only man whose absence it was possible in the whole cantonment to calculate upon with certainty being the host. But be it understood that the visitors were invariably of the sterner sex; the feminine element was in a minority, as in a society where the men outnumber the women in the proportion of ten to one it is only natural they should be.

“How nice of you to come and break my solitude!” exclaimed Lizzie, as she extended her hand. “I really thought I was going to sit down by myself. I don’t

mean to say that my own society is not sufficient for me at times, but to-day does not happen to be one of those times ; this morning I yearn for the voice of my fellow-creatures."

"And I," said Cis, laughing, "am by no means so catholic ; I restrict my yearnings to the voice of one of them."

"I curtsey, metaphorically, to the ground, monsieur, for so pretty a speech ; but in the mean time curry and cutlets are getting cold. Come, let's investigate them before it is too late."

She led the way into the dining-room as she spoke, and had no reason to apologize for her luncheon. Whatever Daventry's circumstances might be, however tight might be the strings of the exchequer, he always kept open house, and was rigid in his dictum that the thing should be done properly ; neither slovenly cookery nor indifferent wine were ever tolerated in any *menage* of his, and it was scarce likely that his present

home should present any infringement of the rule.

“What were you doing all yesterday that I didn’t see you,” said Mrs. Daventry.

“Well, I had an attack of duty, and what with one thing and another, never seemed to have a moment to myself.”

“You might have found time to run up to tell me you hadn’t time to call,” rejoined Lizzie laughing. “I’d an Irish admirer once who never neglected that ceremony.”

“Ah, but you must be an Irishman to indulge in such vagaries. ‘The bull,’ in the hands of the Anglo-Saxon, covers him with ridicule; we lack the assurance and that inimitable appreciation of humbug which distinguishes the Celt. Humbug an Englishman, and when he awakes to it he is wroth; humbug an Irishman, if you *can*, and he not only grins, but warms to you on tumbling to your blarney. Bar whiskey, there’s nothing he’s so fond of save a political ruction.”

“And pray how do you come to be so learned about Ireland?”

“I have been quartered four years in the country, and know this much, that the Celt has been humbugging the Saxon ever since the latter first put foot on the green island, and the Saxon, poor fool, keeps on studying and legislating for him, and goes over to talk to him, and really thinks he understands him. Why can't he leave him to the state of anarchy and discord he delights in. Like the red man of the West, he might gradually improve himself off the face of the earth, then—”

“I brought it on myself, so have no right to complain; but when I confided to you my meek little joke about my devoted admirer in ‘the Rangers,’ I little thought I was to become the recipient of Captain Calvert's panacea for the woes of that Cinderella of nations.”

“A Cinderella that persistently grovels in the ashes. Ten thousand pardons!” ex-

claimed Cis; “I cannot think how on earth Ireland absorbed the conversation in this way. I have read there was a time in London when ‘the dear Poles,’ an equally impossible people, similarly permeated discourse. There always seems to be some outraged nationality always irrepressible; it seems to be the ‘dear Turks’ just now, and judging by the papers, one really might almost think England means taking up arms in their behalf.”

“Don’t talk nonsense, Cis; you know England never fights except out here; anyway, I detest politics. Do you know, I have heard something about you—why you left England.”

“Ah, that story has reached you at last,” replied Calvert drily. “Is, I dare say, the talk of the cantonment by this.”

“I don’t know about that. I should think not at all likely. It was about a race, was it not?”

“Yes; but you can hardly suppose I

want to discuss the miserable business over again."

"Perhaps not, but suppose I do?" and Lizzie stole a look at her companion from under her long lashes.

"You!" he exclaimed, with undisguised amazement.

"Just so; I want to know how much *she* had to do with it."

"I told you once before that my trouble had nothing to do with a woman," returned Cis, doggedly.

"Ah, so you did; but then I could hardly expect you to tell me the truth at that early stage of our acquaintance. I have some claim to demand frank confession now, I think."

"I have nothing to confess," he rejoined angrily, as he rose, "and if I had should decline to confess it. If you know my story, and choose to strike me off your visiting list, I can only regret that the pleasantest part of my life here is over,

and thank you for having lightened the past."

"Sit down, please, and don't be absurd. You know my house would be open to you whatever might be alleged against you in England. If any one should be staunch to her friends, despite what may be said against them, it should be me; not that they have stood by me altogether as they should have done, but I forgive them," and Lizzie smiled sweetly, as one who, pardoning her enemies, heaped coals of fire upon their heads.

But Mrs. Daventry was not altogether satisfied. Her lover was by no means so malleable as she would have him. She was accustomed to find her victims subservient to her rein, and it was patent to her that Cis Calvert was very capable of breaking his chains. Her feeling towards him was still somewhat mixed, but if there were moments when she, so to speak, raged against him for his insensibility, as she termed it,

there were others when she melted in good earnest as she thought about him. She was habituated to see men lose their heads about her, and make mock of it, and it was the knowledge that Cis had by no means lost his balance in presence of her fascinations that so provoked her.

“Do you know that you have never given me anything since I appointed you my adorer in chief,” she remarked, after a considerable pause. “I really think you ought to have presented me with some token of your fealty.”

“What shall it be?” he replied gaily. “It is so difficult to get anything nice here. Shall I order you a ring or a bangle from Bombay?”

“No, you shall give me something of your own for a keepsake. Let me have that locket on your watch chain.”

It was a plain gold locket with a somewhat fantastic A graved on one side of it; but it had been the gift of Annie Aysgarth, and contained a small coil of her soft dark

hair. Calvert's face hardened as the memory of his lost love was thus rudely recalled to him.

"No," he replied sternly, "I cannot give you that. It is a keepsake that I will never part with."

"A *gage d'amour*, of course," retorted Mrs. Daventry pettishly.

"And if it were?"

"Then all I can say," exclaimed Lizzie vehemently, "is, that it is very bad taste, to say the least of it, to flourish your former love-gifts before the woman you at present profess to be devoted to."

Now this was to some extent an exaggeration, and yet it was one impossible for Cis to escape from. He certainly was continually at the Daventrys', he was the lady's constant escort, and must have pleaded guilty to being engaged in a tolerably pronounced flirtation, but he certainly had never so far professed devotion to the extent that Lizzie insinuated.

“I can hardly be accused of that,” he rejoined quietly ; “this locket has hung on my watch chain for some time, and you never heard me make the faintest allusion to it.”

“I wonder whether you care one bit about me,” she cried vehemently. “I wonder whether there’s a soul on earth has any real regard for me. I’m a pretty woman, and it flatters your vanity to be supposed a favourite of mine ; but I doubt whether any man ever honestly cared for me—whether there’s been one of you all who would have risked, not life in my behalf, but some inconvenience.”

The way in which she totally ignored her husband was, though astonishing, not altogether unwarranted, for that gentleman would have been perhaps the very last man to inconvenience himself on her account.

“You know I care for you, Lizzie,” said Calvert quietly, “that I would do anything

for you. I can't give you this trinket, but tell me anything you fancy, and you shall have it.”

He spoke as if the lamp of Aladdin were in his possession.

“Oh yes, it is the old story,” said the lady, disdainfully. “You will give us anything we want, or do anything we wish, and the minute we acquaint you with our wants or wish, then you formulate your excuses for non-compliance.”

“You are unjust, and have no cause to say that of me. When I am fairly tried I don't think you will find me wanting.”

“You mean that you would really do something for me if I asked you, even if it was something you didn't quite like?” and she glanced at him somewhat inquisitively, curious to know how far her empire extended.

“Can you doubt it? Prove me when you will, and you will find it so.”

“That is the conventional answer you all

make, and when we do prove you we see what you mean by it."

"I have done," rejoined Cis; "like you, I don't believe in over much protestation. Should the time ever come you'll find you can depend upon me."

"Good, then you must ride Red Ronald for us in the forthcoming races. There, Cis, you can't complain you've been tried very hardly," and Mrs. Daventry threw herself back in her chair with a light laugh.

In an instant Cis Calvert saw that he was trapped. After his just uttered protestations it was impossible to refuse Lizzie's request, and yet he could not but see that it was prompted by her husband. Sore very about that terrible fiasco with the Mumper, he had determined to have nothing more to do with race riding; he would give the world no further opportunity to accuse him of foul play in that line, at all events, and he had doggedly been deaf to all Daventry's persuasions on the subject. But

now there was nothing else for it but to assent.

“I had made up my mind never to ride again, but of course if you want me, I am at your service,” he said slowly. “Don’t, please, run away with the idea that I am a great artist in the saddle. I can ride a bit, and you may at all events depend upon my doing my best for you.”

“Thank you so much,” she replied as she bent towards him. “You know we both gamble a little, and I don’t mind confessing that, as far as I am concerned, it is necessary that I should win money somehow. Milliners get exigent at times, and my lord and master, though quite capable of bitter invective if I am not decently dressed, is very intolerant of their bills.”

“Can I be of any assistance?” said Cis, in a low tone.

“No,” she rejoined sharply. “You ought to know that you are the last man I would take help from of that description. Let me

enjoy the luxury, Cis, of having for once—well loved a man for himself, and without thought of what he could give me.”

“You do me great honour,” said Cis, softly, “but I think you are wrong not to make use of me if you need it. Never mind, Red Ronald must be driven home triumphant, and then we shall be all landed by Bendameer’s stream for the present; and now, good-bye.”

“Adieu—ride out with me to-morrow morning, and we’ll go up to the race-course, and you shall give Red Ronald a gallop. It’s worth doing, for he can stride along. I rode him myself once, but he pulls too hard, and takes hold of his bit in a way that made me feel insufferably small at the end of two miles. I never was so done.”

“Very well, I must try what I can do. Once more good-bye.”

She looked after him for a moment, then gave an impatient stamp of her little foot.

“I don’t believe he cares a rush about me,” she muttered. “Why can’t I bring

this man to my feet—I who have turned the heads of so many? There’s a woman in England, let him say what he likes; but I’ll beat her if I die for it, and he shall give me that locket, her locket, before many weeks are over.”

CHAPTER X.

NOW BARABBAS WAS A ROBBER.

Cris had a dim foreboding as he rode home that he had done a foolish thing in consenting to ride this race, and yet for the life of him he did not quite see how he could have got out of it. Say no to Mrs. Daventry under the circumstances he could not; and after all, he argued, what harm could possibly come to himself over it? The probability was he rode as well as any one he was likely to meet; the horse was well known, and if it didn't win, well, it could not be helped. It was, no doubt, looking to what it had already accomplished, a good horse; but there was no denying

it was called on to concede a deal of weight, and, as all those understanding of racing know, that brings the mightiest of turf paragons to grief at last. Still he could only do his best with Red Ronald, and if that slashing brown 'waler' failed to hold his own there was no more to be said.

Conversation becomes limited in the monotony of an Indian cantonment, and anything that breaks the wonted stagnation is hailed with acclamation. The races evoked all the sporting tendencies of the Anglo-Saxon, and men deemed innocent of turf mysteries suddenly became endued with all the shibboleth of Newmarket, and babbled of weights, trials, staying, &c., as do their kinsmen at home before the great October handicaps are decided. The Nizam's Gold Plate Cis was fain to admit was cause of as much talk, aye, and speculation, as that ill-starred cup, for attainment of which such trouble has befallen him the winter previous. This horse of Daventry's was in

every one's mouth certainly, but the race carried so many penalties and allowances that it partook somewhat of the nature of a handicap, and there were various maiden Arabs that were reputed to be able to gallop, and were more or less fancied by those connected with them. Rather prominent amongst these was a chestnut horse called Tippoo, that was always bought up with alacrity at the pool, selling at a certain price, and those who bought him were usually no neophytes at Indian racing. With one of these Cis had got rather friendly, and he, upon one of these occasions, asked him if he knew anything about Tippoo.

“Nothing in the least,” replied the other, frankly. “Then why do I so often bid for him, you will ask? Simply because he belongs to Captain Gideon, who is about the knowingest hand on the Bombay turf. I don't even know whether Tippoo's coming here, but if Gideon and his horse do turn

up, I can't think he'll have brought him so far for nothing. But you are likely to be more in the way of knowing than any one. Daventry's a great friend of yours, isn't he ? ”

Cis nodded assent.

“ Well, he and Gideon were racing partners once, and though they split, it was quite a friendly dissolution of partnership. He'll most likely put up with Daventry if he comes ; and if he tells any one—and that Sim Gideon will open his mouth at all is always doubtful—it will be Daventry. As you're going to ride for him, he's bound to give you a hint if Tippoo's dangerous, for I have seen you back Red Ronald more than once.”

“ Yes, I generally stand my own mount for a bit, and the old ‘ waler ’ is an honest good horse, though it's quite possible he may be asked to give too much weight away this time.”

“ That is just it. I think it will bring

him to grief; but as I don't see what is to beat him, I've back'd the man. Sim Gideon's green and white sleeves are always dangerous if they start; but," said the speaker, "backing them is risky, for they so often don't."

Cis was now riding Red Ronald in his morning gallops, and the way in which the big brown Australian took hold of his bit and strode away with him increased his jockey's confidence, and he felt, despite the weight, it would take something superior in Arabs to dispose of him. Daventry and his wife were usually out to superintend the morning's exercise, and day by day the whole party got more and more enthusiastic over the prowess of Red Ronald.

Coming one evening to a dinner to which he had been asked as strictly *en famille*, he was somewhat surprised to find Lizzie endeavouring to make conversation with a slight, dark, sallow-faced man, whose nose betrayed unmistakable Semitic lineage. The new

arrival was evidently no talker ; albeit the keen black eyes most certainly gave the lie to any theory that his reticence was the result of feebleness of intellect. A physiognomist would have recognized the shrewdness of the countenance equally with a man of the world, the latter by the way more to be depended on in judgment than the speculative philosopher. The thin lips were hardly indicative of his race, but they told a tale of quiet determination without much notification of intention. Captain Gideon was essentially not a lady's man ; his manners, like his dress, were quiet and irreproachable, but he had evidently no small talk, and rarest of virtues, understood the art of remaining silent when he had nothing to say. He bowed when introduced to Cis, and honoured him with a somewhat comprehensive stare, but made no attempt at conversation. Even when the races came under discussion, and the Daventrys and Cis waxed eulogistic over the powers of Red

Ronald, and dwelt upon the great chance he possessed of taking the Nizam's Plate, Sim Gideon listened in a dreamy sort of way, as talk about a thing in which he could have no possible interest.

"But you have brought down a horse yourself, Captain Gideon," exclaimed Cis; "and what is more, your chance is fancied by several people here."

"Indeed! I don't know much about 'Tippoo' myself; brought him with me chiefly to see what he was like. There's nothing like a good public trial to ascertain if a young one's any good."

"But that's rather exposing your hand," urged Cis.

"You needn't ride him out, you know," rejoined Gideon, sententiously. "I'm not much of a horseman myself, though I get along out here, where so few of 'em know how to sit still. I do know *that*, and so give my mount a chance; but you'll see in the next two or three days a good many

horses have their heads ridden off. More windmills to be seen on any racecourse out here than there are even at Lincoln."

"What do you mean, Captain Gideon?" exclaimed Mrs. Daventry.

"Well, you can see more windmills from Lincoln racecourse than anywhere I know, but nothing reminds me so much of a windmill as to see our young gentlemen out here commence finishing about a quarter of a mile from home, 'legs and arms a wallop in', wallop in', as the old song has it."

"Ah, well," said Mrs. Daventry, smiling, "we don't intend Red Ronald to be ridden in that fashion, do we, Captain Calvert?"

"I can only promise to do my best; but please don't run away with the idea that I am anything more than an ordinary performer, who, like Gideon, has learnt to sit still. I think I can win on the best horse amongst moderate amateurs, but don't pretend to do more."

A few intimates now dropped in, and

cards became the order of the night. Races are always apt to evoke a temporary spirit of gambling in the place they occur, and the whist and *écarté* ran a little higher than customary, although not so far as to be stigmatized as high play. Cis, who had joined the *écarté* table, and been cursed with a run of persistent bad luck, could not but perceive that Captain Gideon was an expert at the game.

“By Jove!” he muttered to himself, “if he’s as good in the saddle as he is at *écarté* I sha’n’t care to see him at my girths the day after to-morrow.”

“I am afraid you have had a bad night,” said Mrs. Daventry as Cis made his adieux. “Captain Gideon is always bad to beat at cards, and also on a racecourse; however, I don’t think we need be afraid of him this time. Were Tippoo dangerous I should have heard of it.”

“He’s an old friend of yours, I suppose?”

“Mine!” she replied, in a low tone, while

a look of ineffable disdain swept across her face. "Merci, Monsieur! No; he is one of my husband's intimates."

Daybreak the next morning saw half the cantonment out to see the different horses gallop, and none of them attracted more attention than Red Ronald; and the resolute way in which he galloped the whole of the Trimulgherry course under Calvert's guidance delighted his backers, who were further inspired with confidence by the way in which his jockey rode him, a matter of as much moment as the prowess of the horse.

Tippoo also attracted considerable attention, not so much on his own account as on the well-known astuteness of his owner. He was a neat enough looking chestnut, but somewhat small, even for an Arab, and was ridden in his work by a native jockey, although Gideon was there to superintend, and made no secret that he should ride the horse himself in the actual race.

Another of the competitors that was followed about by a knot of admirers was a handsome iron-grey Arab called Saladin. The Soldan,* as he was sometimes called, had won three or four good races, and although these naturally entailed penalties, his party thought they were no more than he could concede, except in the case of the mighty Australian ; and as a ‘waler,’ and on account of a long series of victories, Red Ronald had even to give Saladin a good bit of weight. This was the one horse in the race that Daventry was afraid of ; he thought he could beat him, but was fain to admit he had not got quite so accurate a line to go upon as he would have wished ; in short, the race was not quite such a good thing for Red Ronald as the Major liked when he was backing that noble animal in earnest. Money was rather scarce with him, too, just at present, and

* “ For Saladin the Soldan said,
Where’er that madcap Richard led,
Allah ! he held his breath with dread,
And split his sides with laughing.”

if the race for the Nizam's Plate should come off wrong, Daventry felt that he would have rather an awkward stile to get over, and he finally determined to save himself on Saladin, and with that view asked Calvert to back the horse for him, not liking, as he said, to do so himself.

The night before the races was always dedicated at Secunderabad to extensive and final pool-selling; there had been, of course, pool-selling before as well as betting, but the heavier pools were generally reserved for this particular evening. The rendezvous for this business was the public rooms, the hour half-past nine, the selling to commence punctually at ten, which enabled those interested to get their dinners comfortably, and it also allowed ample time for speculation and discussion before midnight. When the first pool was put up, the place was thronged with men in every description of mess dress, amidst whom mingled some few in civilian garb. There were many

who cared little about the races further than they made excuse for a pleasant picnic, but they knew they should meet every one at the rooms and hear all the gossip of the cantonment. Where could one smoke a cheroot more profitably than in discovering what one's neighbours were saying about each other?

The prominent feature of the evening, as far as speculation went, was the support awarded to Tippoo. His owner personally bought him in pool after pool, and made several heavy bye bets about him besides. The Saladin party stood manfully to their guns, and never missed buying their horse when he went at a certain price, but Cis Calvert, who was executing Daventry's commission, interfered with them a good deal. Red Ronald, the favourite, threatened at first to decline in public estimation, as when put up his owner made no sign, but young Heckington, one of his intimate friends, came to the front, and supported

him as boldly as Captain Gideon had Tippoo, winding up by betting an even thousand rupees that Red Ronald beat the latter with Tippoo's owner.

It was towards the end of the evening that Dan Sherston, the general's aide, sauntered into the rooms and inquired what was doing.

A keen sportsman all round, it was singular that he had not put in an appearance before, but, as he explained, the mail was in from England, and the Chief's despatches happening to be of considerable importance this time, getting away sooner had been impossible.

"What has been going on here?"

"You'd never guess, Dan," exclaimed one of his chums. "Gideon has been backing that chestnut pony of his as if the race was a gift to him."

"Hum! that is startling intelligence after what we saw of the little chestnut this morning, but I'll back my news to

smother yours! You will all see it in the papers to-morrow morning when you get them. We've declared war with Russia!"

"What! War! We're at war! With Russia!" exclaimed half-a-dozen voices. "You surely don't mean that, Sherston!"

"Indeed I do; and from private letters hear that all England is on the boil, that drums are beating, colours flying, and the nation mighty unanimous about the humbling of the Muscovite."

"And France goes with us, I suppose," said Calvert.

"Yes, and the siege of Silistria goes on, and the Guards have sailed for Malta; in short, the ball bids fair to open in right lively fashion. Everybody at home is under orders for the East, horse, foot, and artillery."

"But I don't suppose there will be any actual fighting. Russia would never be so mad as to let things come to extremities with the Western Powers. It will all end in a mere demonstration, and a peace

with Turkey being patched up," observed Calvert.

"I don't know about that," rejoined a grim old colonel who had served through the Punjaub campaign, and many another tough piece of business. "The Russians are a mighty tenacious people, or, at all events, their rulers are, doggedly pursuing their own purposes, and taking little heed of what folks say concerning them. You see they believe implicitly it is their destiny to rule at Constantinople, and so does the Moslem, but they are always wrangling about the time; then the two races hate each other, and both are impressed with the idea that it is pious, praiseworthy, and a step towards the attainment of heaven, or paradise, to cut the other's throat. No, you may as well expect to separate a couple of wild cats by expostulation now they have once commenced. I'd back it to require forcible intervention."

"But Russia would surely never risk a

war with France, England, and Turkey," said Calvert.

"Why not?" rejoined the veteran. "It is all very well to declare war against Russia, but it is not so easy to know where to hit her. The first Napoleon found that to his cost. No, mark me, Russia won't desist from her endeavours to worry the Turk until she's had a pretty severe pummelling. In the mean time the Moslem seems to take a good deal of worrying, and to be dying hard."

"We haven't had a bet, Captain Calvert," said Gideon, as he joined the circle. "Wouldn't you like to back your mount tomorrow? Tippoo beats him for a thousand rupees, if that suits you."

"No, thanks; I don't bet," replied Cis.

"I beg pardon," rejoined the other, laughing. "Delighted to find you don't fancy Red Ronald; but about not betting, surely I've heard you backing Saladin pretty freely this evening."

“That was different. That was not—” and here Cis stopped abruptly, “for myself,” he was about to add, but suddenly he reflected it was hardly fair to explain that he had been merely executing a commission for Daventry, as that gentleman had so evidently desired to keep himself in the background regarding it. “I had reasons for that,” he concluded vaguely.

His inconsequential remark evidently attracted some little attention from the spectators, but Gideon hastened to reply—

“Pray excuse my stupidity. One is of course not always bound to back one’s vanity instead of one’s judgment. Captain Calvert, you have made me more afraid of Saladin considerably than I was. If you have tranquillized my nerves somewhat about Red Ronald, it has only been at the expense of raising a bugbear in Saladin. I shall dream I can never quite get up to the Soldan all night.”

The lookers on smiled at this badinage, but Cis felt no little irritated.

"If you think I have no belief in Red Ronald you are mistaken," he replied sharply, "and to show you that I hold that opinion you can book the bet you offered. I beat you for a thousand rupees to-morrow."

"Done," rejoined Gideon quietly, and then lounged listlessly away.

"What is Captain Gideon's regiment?" inquired Cis of a quiet, shrewd-looking man, who had been an apparently amused listener to the foregoing conversation.

"The Royal Rohillas at present, I should assume; but I forgot you are new to India, and will scarcely understand me. Gideon has been out of the service some years, and is now simply a leading turf man; keeps a large stud, and is a bold and dashing better. The Rohillas are hill tribes, with predatory instincts, and your regular turfite is of necessity imbued with the same."

“Thanks; good night,” and Cis proceeded in search of his ‘tat.’

As he cantered that useful animal homewards he pondered a good deal over the night's proceedings. The affair of the Mumper had made him sceptical, and again and again did he curse the mischance that had mixed him up with the Secunderabad races. Still he could see no reason for the vague feeling of uneasiness that possessed him. That Daventry should seek to make himself safe by backing his most dangerous antagonist was but natural, and that an astute racing man like Captain Gideon, who was very sweet on his choice, should endeavour to get every rupee he could on his horse was quite in the order of things, and yet, confident as he felt in Red Ronald's ability to win, he could not shake off a sense of impending trouble. His equivocal relations with Mrs. Daventry might have been deemed quite sufficient to warrant such feeling in the eyes of most men, but

that source of tribulation never occurred to Cis.

The fierce tropic sun had scarce begun to relax in its intensity before all Secunderabad was on its way to Trimulgherry race-course. The burnt-up turf reminded one more of the harrowed American track than the green sward of Ascot or Newmarket; but waggonettes, buggies, and carriages, the classification of which surpassed all knowledge, clustered thickly round the winning-post. In rear of the carriages, on both sides of the course, ran a line of marquees, each of which flew its regimental burgee, after the manner of the drags at Epsom, and where iced drinks, &c. were dispensed *ad libitum*. There was much talk, laughter, and flirtation going on amongst the gathering, here and there diversified by the equipage of some sporting rajah from the city of Hyderabad, with the long tails of his horses dyed red, and his snowy turban adorned with an *aigrette* of diamonds, while his dark

eyes glittered in anticipation of the fun, for in his indolent and somewhat lordly fashion your Asiatic is a keen sportsman, untroubled by the scruples which oppress his western compeer, and not one that understands why "the gladiator pale for his pleasure" should not draw "bitter and perilous breath." One thing noticeable was the absence of any attempt at a betting-ring; such speculation as was indulged in on the races virtually finished at the Assembly Rooms over-night, and there was little or no further wagering on their result.

Mrs. Daventry was there, looking her best and brightest in a bonnet that awoke pangs of jealousy and curiosity in many a feminine breast. Where did she get it? how could she wear it? and similar interrogatories were sufficient to show that their minds were much exercised concerning it; indeed, Mrs. Daventry was wont to be a subject of much tribulation to her sisters, who were always abusing, envying, and

secretly admiring her. Not her beauty, for that they were much given to denying, and wondering what the men could see in her; but her *hardiesse*, whatever they might say, always commanded their respect.

Both Captain Gideon and Cis were lounging at Mrs. Daventry's carriage, lazily looking on at the two or three minor races which, like the preliminary farce at a theatre, ushered in the *pièce de resistance*. Mrs. Daventry looked restless and uneasy. Suddenly she exclaimed—

“I have just heard, Captain Gideon, that you backed your horse for a good deal of money last night.”

“I certainly backed him a bit,” replied Gideon, quietly. “The price was tempting. He was going begging in the pools, and I have more belief in Tippoo than other people.”

“But I understood you to have penned your faith on our horse, and yet I'm told you were backing Tippoo against him for level money last night.”

“Happened to suit my book. You ladies never understand the peculiar exigencies involved in that expression, and that one may be backing a horse whose chance we have no belief in, simply as a matter of figures;” and here Gideon swung himself off the box and walked away, ostensibly in pursuit of refreshment, but it struck Cis to avoid further questioning.

“I don’t understand it, and I have not been able to see my husband. I suppose it is time now you went down to weigh in,” said Mrs. Daventry, hurriedly; “but whatever you do never take your eye off Captain Gideon. He not only can ride, but is a very tricky rider besides, and he don’t back horses as I’m told he backed Tippoo last night without reason. That he should tell us nothing about it would not surprise me in the least. He rarely takes his most intimate friends into his confidence, and twenty-four hours ago professed to know nothing about Tippoo. Adieu for

the present, and may good luck attend you."

Mrs. Daventry's last words had put Cis on the *qui vive*, and the first thing that struck him was, that Red Ronald seemed to have lost his fire and go very sluggishly in his preliminary canter. Yes, there was no doubt about it, the horse did not move with the freedom he had shown in his gallops; and Cis wondered whether there was anything wrong with him, or whether it was merely that the afternoon sun had made him lazy. "He'll wake up, I dare say, when he's set going."

"Who the devil's riding Saladin?" asked Gideon, as they walked their horses down to the post; and Cis listened with some little curiosity for the reply, as he glanced at the pale, slim young gentleman, with the mere suggestion of a moustache, who bestrode that redoubtable iron grey.

"Don't know his name," answered Tom Dufton, one of the cheeriest and most

sporting soldiers in the presidency, and who was for the moment enjoying the dubious honour of piloting a Persian-bred horse, the property of one of the Rajah's patronizing the meeting, which he had irreverently described as all legs and tail when first introduced to it; "but he's a young un staying with the collector, who has come out on the shoot and 's mad to kill his tiger and all that sort of thing. The collector has got the pieces down this time, Sim, and no mistake, and I don't think you'll find the young un a duffer at the finish. I shan't be there to see; this long-legged brute will never get two miles, but I hear he's one of the coming lights of the Bibury Club, and took down the number of one or two of their cracks last year."

"Well, the new importations have it between them. I suppose it lies between the grey and Red Ronald."

"Hum! not quite, Sim, I should think, after the way you backed yours last night.

I thought what was good enough for you should be good enough for me, and consequently am standing Tippoo for a trifle—”

“I dare say I shall be near enough to see how the new lights finish, and tell you whether the hope of the Bibury or Captain Calvert is the better jock; but here’s the starter.”

The despatching of some six or seven horses on a two mile contest is not a very difficult matter; that perilous advantage of getting off in front is not so eagerly snatched at as in shorter races—advantage that so often brings juvenile light-weights to grief in the temptation it holds forth to ‘ride their heads off.’ The field for the Nizam’s Plate is delayed for a moment or two, thanks to the vagaries of Tom Dufton’s mount, the Persian-bred one showing a lamentable lack of manners at the post, and then they are away. The running is as usual made by the chorus, as one may designate those that swell the field, but rarely influence the

result, while the leading performers lie in a cluster behind them. At the mile post Tom Dufton feels the fractious Persian die away, not gradually, but rapidly in his hands, while at the same moment Cis thoroughly grasps the fact that Red Ronald is dead as a stone. Instead of reaching at his bit, and shaking his head in his usual fashion, he has come this first mile in a dull, inert manner that his rider cannot understand ; and it becomes necessary now to shake him up, even to keep him on terms with his horses. As the chorus, including the Rajah's hope, die away, Saladin and Tippoo forge to the front, and Cis takes third place, but with the conviction that his horse will be left as if standing the minute they begin racing in earnest. He is speedily confirmed in his opinion, for, taking the lead, Gideon brings them along a cracker with a view to making the weight tell on Saladin. A cry from the carriages proclaims that the favourite is beat, as Cis is

seen to be riding his horse ; it is only for a few strides, however. Red Ronald seems hopelessly out-paced, and without the semblance of a struggle left in him, and his jockey, far too good a horseman to needlessly distress a beaten animal, drops his hands and promptly eases him. Tippoo looks like winning easily, but the rising star of the Bibury Club hangs like a shadow at his quarters, and bringing Saladin with a determined rush in the last half-dozen strides, in spite of Gideon's resolute finish, lands the grey winner by a neck.

The Collector and the Saladin party generally were jubilant as winners usually are. Sim Gideon wore his habitual look of placid indifference, as if it really was an affair in which he had no concern ; but there were two faces that undoubtedly expressed dissatisfaction at the result, although, perhaps, in different ways. There was an angry flush on Calvert's countenance, as of a man who has to call some

one to prompt account for his conduct; while Daventry's for once looked no little disconcerted at the result of the race, which seemed the more curious to Cis, when he reflected that he himself had backed Saladin for Daventry to an extent that must have rendered the victory of that gallant grey tolerably innocuous to him.

"What is the meaning of this, Captain Calvert? What was the matter with Red Ronald?" inquired Lizzy, as he joined the little knot round the carriage who were condoling with its fair owner on her defeat in the Plate.

"Too much weight, I suppose," replied Cis, carelessly; "the old horse fairly stopped with me when it came to racing."

Mrs. Daventry looked keenly at him for a moment, and then cried gaily—

"Well, I am ruined, and shall have to wear cleaned gloves and old frocks for the next three months. I am sorry, Captain Calvert, we ever asked you to ride such an impostor."

“You have no cause to say that, Mrs. Daventry. Red Ronald is a good horse though he didn’t show himself so to-day. He’ll win many a good stake for you yet. For the present, adieu ; I must go and put off my riding toggery.”

“Couldn’t have been a very bad race for him anyhow,” exclaimed Heckington. “He backed Saladin last night to win him a pretty good sum.”

“What ? Captain Calvert backed Saladin !” said Mrs. Daventry, sharply. “Are you sure, Mr. Heckington ?”

“Quite so. Next to the Collector and his immediate party Calvert was the most prominent supporter of the grey.”

On his way to the dressing tent Cis met Daventry.

“Bad business very. I’ve dropped a pot over it myself,” exclaimed that worthy. “I fancied my chance strongly. I suppose it was the weight that beat him.”

“Weight !” ejaculated Cis, contemptu-

ously. "He was no more the same horse I galloped yesterday morning than a mule's a monkey. The horse was hocussed, and to get at who drugged him is your next business. He hung dead on his bridle before he'd gone half a mile."

"Impossible!" cried Daventry.

"A fact," rejoined Cis. "I'm as sure the horse was, nay, is still, under the influence of an opiate as if I had seen him take it. There's a proper scoundrel in your stable, and the sooner you make him out the better."

Cis Calvert is right; and it will be well for him that he also should arrive at knowledge of that scoundrel.

CHAPTER XI.

A BITTER QUARREL.

DINNER at the Daventrys' that evening was by no means an hilarious business. It had been intended that the triumph of Red Ronald should have been celebrated by a select band of eight; but Cis Calvert and another had sent excuses at the last moment and the remainder had very little to be jocund about. Daventry had not only lost a considerable sum of money, despite of appearances, but felt convinced that it was due to having yielded to the persuasions of his late racing confederate at the last moment, and pursued a tortuous policy instead of running his horse fairly. Gideon's

shifty tactics had more than once in the days of their partnership cost him dear both in rupees and reputation, and he ought never to have been such a fool as to listen to him. He verily believed that Red Ronald would have won had he been allowed, for although he had no intention of admitting it, none knew better than Daventry that Cis Calvert had reason for the opinion he had expressed concerning his mount. The hostess was indignant that she had been made a cat's-paw of. She did not understand it all as yet, but she felt sure that she had been bidden persuade Calvert to ride a horse which had not been meant to win, and she was exceeding wroth at this. The same queer feeling that made this reckless pirate abstain from plundering him herself prompted her to guard against any attempt to involve him in her husband's questionable practices. Daventry might have said what he liked, but Lizzie would have been thoroughly loyal to Cis, and never urged

him to ride this race for them had she not believed it to be all perfectly honest and straightforward. She did not know exactly what had taken place, but was quite as convinced that Red Ronald had met with foul play, as had his rider, and it was with no little asperity that she replied to her husband's remark before dinner—"Calvert's very late ; but I suppose we must give him a few minutes more law," with—

"I've a note from Captain Calvert to say he's not well enough to come ; and I don't wonder at it. Such a ride as he had to-day might well make any man sick."

Daventry did not venture upon a reply ; he could cow her when they were alone, but in public she sometimes defied him. He knew that she recked little what she said when her blood was up, and that to attempt to bandy words with her was dangerous—quite capable of washing the family linen in public on such occasions ; and there never

was a man more alive to the foolishness of that than Daventry—and rightly too, as some of it was of a hue more sombre than society quite tolerates.

As for Sim Gideon, whose innate love of fraudulent practices had brought about the extremely unpleasant result of the Nizam's Plate, he was as usual unmoved at the collapse of his schemes. This is invariably an attribute of great swindlers: they are as indefatigable in spinning their webs and as undismayed at the breaking of their meshes as a spider. A thorough 'leg' of this description, who starts with the status of a gentleman, maintains a precarious position in social circles for a marvellously long period at times, and when at last he is taken so red-handed that all club-land casts him out, accepts his ostracism with philosophical stoicism.

Mrs. Daventry had long retired to her room, and the other guests, after a little stiff whist, had at length departed, leaving

Daventry and his guest still smoking in the verandah.

“Well, you’ve made a precious mess of it,” observed the host, grimly. “I wish to heaven you and Tippoo had never come near Secunderabad ; left alone, I fancy I should have won right enough with Red Ronald, and landed a good stake ; now I’m stone broke.”

“Pooh, you backed Saladin, or rather Calvert did for you, to about cover you. Can’t see you’re much hurt, anyway,” rejoined Gideon in his habitual languid drawl.

“I had to bet it nearly all away again at the last moment. The Collector challenged me to back my own horse against his, and knowing how Red Ronald would run I daren’t refuse. If he’d known our little game he couldn’t have had me more neatly.”

Sim Gideon gave a low whistle. That any possible regard for his reputation should provoke a man into injudicious betting was

simply past his comprehension ; but then, it was some years since he had had a reputation worth speaking of.

“ Well,” he replied at length, “ if you were weak enough to be chaffed into backing a horse you had given me permission to settle, you can’t be surprised that you’ve had a bad race. I can only tell you again what I told you before, that Tippoo did not run up to his trial ; if he had he would have beaten Saladin far enough. There was five times the money to be made over him that there was over Red Ronald, and the latter was the only horse I was afraid of. You couldn’t scratch him, and you daren’t hint to Calvert that he wasn’t wanted. There was only the one way to put him out of it—that opiate in his water. It’s unlucky, devilish unlucky, as I fancy you could have won with the ‘ waler ’ ; but it’s more unlucky for Calvert than any one.

“ Unlucky for Calvert ! What do you mean ? ” exclaimed Daventry hurriedly, and

as he spoke a white arm gleamed for a second in the moonlight, as a window above their heads, and equally under the pent-house roof of the verandah, was pushed a little more open.

“Why, you see he backed Saladin a good bit last night, and who has an idea it was for you? He rides against him to-day, and never attempts to take his horse up to him at the finish; the public generally won’t understand it was because he couldn’t. The public are a very muddle-headed lot, and will probably come to the conclusion that Calvert, having backed Saladin, pulled Red Ronald. I fancy there’s a queer racing story against him in England. Shouldn’t wonder if you’re not a good deal condoled with.”

“There is, though I don’t know the exact particulars; but his crucifixion won’t do me any good. I don’t see how I’m to get back my money; and you?”

“Don’t mean to be long out of mine. It won’t be long before Tippoo and I tackle the

Collector again, and mark me, Saladin goes down next time. The trial was right, and he hasn't a lease of his new jockey, that was a few points in his favour this time. But it's getting deuced late, so good night. I've to make an early start of it to-morrow, so if you are not up, good-bye," and Gideon sought his chamber.

Very little of the foregoing conversation had escaped Lizzie's ears. She had gone to the open casement for a little fresh air in the first instance ; but no sooner did she catch the subject of their talk, than she composed herself deliberately to listen. In her excitement to hear why it should be "more unlucky for Calvert than any one," she could not resist pushing the casement a trifle further open, lest Gideon's reply should escape her, and recognized at once the correctness of his deductions. She ground her little white teeth as she got into bed, and perhaps never felt more bitter towards her husband than she did this night. She

would have laughed to scorn the idea that she was in love with Cis Calvert, but would have been much puzzled to explain why she so rigidly exempted him from that irregular taxation she never scrupled to levy on her other admirers, and Lizzie had refused to accept any but the most trifling mementoes from his hands. She was very angry to think that he had been robbed, not so much of his money,—though she knew he had lost that too,—but of his reputation, and that it was she who had lured him to his undoing. But for her he would have persisted in his refusal to ride Red Ronald, and been perfectly clear of the whole business, and now, great heavens ! he would hold her cause of it all, and perhaps believe in her complicity with Gideon and her husband. If it was only mere caprice on her part to bring this man to her feet Lizzie would have exulted in an occurrence that promised indirectly to assist her object. A man who had fled from a racing scandal at home

could hardly present himself as rehabilitated by another incurred in India. It would tend to still further part him from that woman in England of whom Lizzie felt so fiercely jealous. But a woman who loved in earnest could hardly endure that the subject of her passion should receive harm at her hands ; and Lizzie was on the verge of discovering that, for the first time since her ill-starred marriage, she had fallen genuinely in love. She had run away from school with her husband only to be speedily disenchanted. The moon-stricken Juliets of this world, with their milk-and-water fantasies, little dream of the fierce passions of the Cleopatras ; and it is only in their noon-tide at times that even they make such discovery, and then—well, we can but wish them well through with it.

“I am afraid your schemes went a little awry yesterday,” observed Mrs. Daventry to her husband the next morning at breakfast.

The remark was made in soft, indifferent

tones, apparently ; but the Major's trained ear detected the covert sarcasm immediately.

"You're about right ; they did. Money is likely to be scarcer than ever for some little time, so the less you come to me for it the better."

"It had no business to be scarce," she replied haughtily, and in a manner that involuntarily attracted his attention. "If you had not been led away by Captain Gideon's over-cleverness, but simply trusted to a good horse, with a good man on him to win your money, you would have done well enough. I ventured once to remark when you were partners, that Captain Gideon's habit of invariably going round two sides of the triangle to get where he wanted would infallibly beat him in the end."

If irritated he was somewhat struck by the shrewdness of the illustration.

"You happen to be right in the present instance," he rejoined, sharply ; "but great *coups* are not brought off without a little

financing. Tippoo didn't come off; but it was the best thing I have been in for years, and it was very near landed."

"Quite so; only Tippoo, having metaphorically to go round two sides of the triangle to Saladin's one, was of course defeated."

"That will do!" shouted the Major. "Unnecessary discussion of disagreeable subjects is the most ridiculous waste of time conceivable. I presume you have said your perfectly uncalled-for say."

"I have only to add that I request you will not induce me to lead my friends into such dubious conspiracies in future. Captain Calvert may be seriously compromised by—by Captain Gideon's roguery."

"Turned moralist by all that's incomprehensible," exclaimed Daventry in blank astonishment. "Let's look at you, madam, in your new character. I suppose you'll be troubled with a mission next, with a big M. Listen to me; I stand no fooleries of

that nature. You may dance, ride, and flirt to the top of your bent ; but you'll do as I tell you, and not trouble me with moralities."

"I will take no more part in entrapping men to risk their characters in such arrant villanies as this last you and Captain Gideon plotted," she retorted proudly.

Daventry walked across to her and looked down keenly into her face. She met his gaze without flinching for a moment, and then her glance faltered, and her eyes dropped.

"By the gates of Somnath she's in love with him !" exclaimed the Major with a burst of derisive laughter.

"And if I were !" she returned passionately, as she sprang to her feet. "Have I received such kindness and loving consideration from you these past years as should make such a thing impossible. Have I not been openly flung at the head of any man who had either money or interest to serve your ends. Have I not even been

bidden take my milliners' bills for payment to those who should have dreaded a further settlement with you for presuming to interfere had you been a man instead of the despicable black-leg you are. Has there been any tie between us save fear of you, and the rending of the last few rags of respectability that covered me on the one side, and the sordid feeling that I was of use to you on the other. Don't suppose that I acknowledge any authority to control me in the future save that of mutual convenience. Separate yourself from me, and see what comes of it. You owe me more than I owe you. More than one of your many scrapes you would never have tided over without my help. Try me too hard, and you will see what it is to have me against you."

She ceased, and overcome with her excitement, threw herself back into a lounging-chair that was handy.

"She's broken loose, by Jove!" thought

the Major. "I'm perfectly right; it's love for this beggar Calvert has put the devil in her. There wasn't a better broke woman in the country, and the idea of her ever caring about a fellow in earnest, with all her experience, seemed preposterous; but, by the Lord! when they fall in love they're all out of hand, and there's no counting what pranks they'll play.

"I'll not argue our mutual obligations," he rejoined cynically, "it's hardly worth while. If you mean running away with Calvert, don't think I am going to interfere. It will be unpleasant for three people, but before the year's out I fancy Calvert is the one who will be most alive to the mistake. You also may find those 'rags of respectability' garments not to be found in all shop-windows. No, we'll not discuss it further," he interposed sharply, as Lizzie seemed about to rise again; "best not. Go or stay, but in the latter case you'll do as I tell you. Good-bye for the present."

For a few minutes after Daventry's departure Lizzie sat motionless, but her little hands gripped the arm of the chair as if they would crush it, her eyes glittered with anger and excitement, her breath came short and thick. She trembled with passion, and it was, perhaps, as well no weapon had been to her hand during that last speech of her husband's. Women have stretched men lifeless at their feet for such hideous gibing ere now, and Lizzie was not of a temper to reck consequences under bitter provocation. At length she rose, and stepping out into the verandah, began to pace slowly up and down and think. There had been many a hot quarrel between her and Hugh Daventry during their ten years of wedded life, but he'd never ventured to loose his mocking tongue so coarsely as to-day. Previously she had invariably succumbed to his sneers, but was conscious this time of having held her own. Still the more she thought of it the more she felt

that the quarrel between them was *à l'outrance*. She might not go off with Cis Calvert, but she could no longer live with Hugh Daventry. She had no woman friend with whom she could take refuge in this emergency, for, as she well knew, Lizzie Daventry, under her husband's protection, and backed by her own dauntless assurance, had hard work to hold her own; but deprived of those, to aid her was simply to swamp the woman rash enough to constitute herself her champion. Reckless freebooter as she was, and merciless as she had been at times in her exactions from her victims, Lizzie had a certain queer vein of chivalry in her.

“No!” she muttered, with a little sharp laugh very different from her usual ringing peal, “those who have been good to me, poor dears, have as much as they can do to take care of themselves. I'll not transfer my troubles to crafts frail as my own, and so drown my friends;” and then once more

Lizzie marched slowly up and down, thinking of what she had best do.

Wrong and indefensible it might be, but the idea of eloping with Cis Calvert held a very prominent part in her deliberations. She was rapidly awaking to the fact of how very dear this man was to her, and the more it dawned upon her, so in similar ratio increased the misgiving of whether he had any love for her. What should she do? That she would leave Hugh Daventry before the week was out she was determined—but how? Ah! that was not quite so easy to come to a conclusion about.

“At all events,” thought Lizzie, “I must see Cis again. I am bound both to wish him good-bye and to justify myself in his eyes. He shall at all events know from my own lips that I was innocent of the treachery practised on him in the matter of Red Ronald, though I can’t think Cis would believe me guilty of having any knowledge of such a thing when I begged

him to ride for us. Robbers we are, both of us; but even Hugh never would have so out-Barabbassed Barabbas if it had not been for that detestable Captain Gideon."

But the next day and the day after passed, to Mrs. Daventry's amazement, without Cis putting in an appearance, nor did they bring a line from him explanatory of such an unusual circumstance. With her husband she hardly exchanged a word, and even he was as yet unaware that Gideon's prediction had been fulfilled—that already a murmur was running through the cantonment that Red Ronald had been unfairly ridden, and that Captain Calvert had won a nice stake over Saladin's victory; such head, indeed, had the scandal arrived at that on the third day the colonel of the Royal Dunbars had sent for Calvert to his bungalow and acquainted him with the story. That Cis should repudiate it in most unmeasured terms was but natural; but he avowed frankly that in

his own opinion the horse had been, in racing parlance, 'got at.'

Now the Royal Dunbars had the mischance to be commanded at that time, as has happened to divers other distinguished regiments in turn, by a vacillating, irritable old woman, keenly jealous of his own power, and wonderfully afraid of those in authority over him; not the man this to stand up for one of his officers in trouble, but, on the contrary, certain to abandon him for fear of offending the authorities. In Cis's indignant denial—and that it was made with some warmth be sure—he thought he discerned want of respect for himself.

"Want of temper, Captain Calvert," he spluttered, "will not rebut a rumour of this sort. It will be more to the point if you write me a letter to denounce Major Daventry, so that I can forward it to the General."

"I don't denounce Major Daventry, sir. I say in my opinion the horse was drugged ;

I don't for one moment assert with his owner's knowledge."

"Ah, well, if you will mix yourself up with people like that, a man is judged a good deal by the society he keeps."

"That is somewhat hard on him, Colonel Milkinson, when he belongs to the Royal Dunbars," retorted Cis, now thoroughly angry.

"What do you mean, sir?" stammered the Colonel, dimly conscious of hidden sarcasm in this rejoinder. "By heavens, I am not the man to tolerate disrespect. You have not got on with us since you joined. You're bringing a scandal on us now; in short, sir," continued Milkinson, churning himself gradually into a state of much wrath, "the regiment does not like you."

"And that is by no means the worst of it," replied Cis, who was getting cooler in proportion to the other's rising choler.

"Not the worst of it! By the Lord, sir, what can be—"

"I don't like the regiment," interrupted Cis, blandly.

For a few seconds Colonel Milkinson was literally dumbfounded. That any one should presume to consider service in his regiment anything short of Paradise was inconceivable; then he spluttered out in a voice that trembled with passion—

"Under those circumstances, sir, the sooner you leave it the better."

"Quite so; I am glad to find we are of one mind on that point. I will make my arrangements with all possible despatch, and presume, Colonel Milkinson, I may reckon on you to facilitate them."

"They cannot be too quickly made, Captain Calvert, for both the credit and comfort of the Royal Dunbars."

Cis flushed angrily, for he felt that old Milkinson had 'scored one' to wind up with, and a fierce retort rushed to his lips which for once he had the prudence to

swallow. I shall send in my papers to-morrow. Good-morning, sir.

When Cis reached his own bungalow and began to reflect, he speedily came to the conclusion that he had veritably 'done it' this time. He had made up his mind to abandon his profession, and distinctly told Milkinson so. To withdraw from that position would be excessively humiliating, and it was possible the Colonel might demur very much to such retraction even if he himself wished it, which he did not. No, better quit the service at once ; he could not go from regiment to regiment, leaving always an ugly story behind him. And then he thought grimly what would they think of him at The Firs. What would York and his old comrades of the Lancers say when the news came home that he had had to leave the Royal Dunbars on account of another racing scandal ? and as he thought of Annie Aysgarth listening tearfully to the story, and perhaps even crediting it, his lip

twitched a little. The minute Milkinson had pointed out the rumour afloat concerning him he recognised at once how terribly against him appearances were. People cannot believe in a man being always wrongfully accused. A man may be charged with roguery wrongfully, and his friends believe that it is so, but when a few months later he is once more cited for the same offence their belief in him is bound to be considerably shaken. Brought up twice in six months for stealing watches, and the odds are, the man is a professional pickpocket, and not the victim of untoward circumstances. Cis saw all this clearly, and the more he thought of it the more convinced he was that the service had done with him. A man with two such stories tacked to his name could not continue in a profession in which they would meet him at every step. What he was to turn his hand to next he didn't know, but at all events he should get clear of a country he detested,

and would have the proceeds of his commission at his disposal while he looked round.

He turned to the table for a match with which to light a fresh cheroot, and suddenly became aware of an English letter lying there—sign that another mail was in. Those were stirring times, and the mails eagerly looked for. A glance showed him it was from Harry Harperley. He tore it open; it was dated Woolwich, April, 1854, and ran as follows:—

“DEAR CIS,

“We are just off for the East, have been swinging our horses all day, and sail to-morrow. We were rather in a funk we should be left behind, as we saw so many other regiments go before we got a hint we should be wanted. The excitement is intense, though there is any amount of difference of opinion about how things will turn out. The general opinion I think is, there will be no fighting, and that the Russians will cave when they find we are

in earnest. At all events, nearly all the infantry and artillery have been pushed on to Varna, a place on the Black Sea, of which no doubt you never heard. We are all getting so learned about Turkey, and do nothing but read about her, and study maps of her, and dream of seeing Seraglio Point, the Golden Horn, the Sweet Waters, and smoking our chibouques in the big bazaar at Stamboul. The governor has behaved like a brick—paid all my ticks, and gave me *carte blanche* for an outfit, but that is not of course a very big affair. He came up to town to see the last of me, and will run down here to-morrow to wish us all God speed. It's worth being a soldier now, I tell you; as Strangford says, the public is only just beginning to appreciate us. All the bands are perpetually playing 'Cheer, boys, Cheer,' I presume with a view to exhort the nation not to be quite heart-broken at our departure. Hang it all, Cis, how I wish you were with us; and if not exactly with *us*, you can be with the army if you like. All sorts of fellows are volunteering, and I

heard the Chief say last night,—he'd just come back from having a last few words at the Horse Guards,—‘It don't look as if the Government thought it would all end in smoke; the military bigwigs there are besieged by volunteers, and, sign of the way the wind blows, I hear, accept the services of all who are worth their salt. Any man who has served for a few years is sure of employment. They are going to raise all sorts of Turkish auxiliary corps.’ Good-bye, and God bless you. Annie told me to give you her love when I wrote, but she would send no further message, although I rather pressed her.

“Yours ever,

“HARRY HARPERLEY.”

“P.S.—Wild rumours that the allies really mean striking a blow, which I presume in our less stilted vernacular means have a cut at the Ruskis. *Viva!* May we arrive in time.”

Cis read Harry's letter through twice, and then throwing it down sat smoking and

musings for a good half-hour ; at the end of that time he rose and muttered, "That's what I'll do. My papers go in to-morrow, and I'll be off to Bombay in three days. The General's sure to give me leave under the circumstances, and from Bombay I'll make my way straight to Constantinople. What to do next I shall find out there. Yes, when a man is like me, '*sans s'ia sous sans souci*,' it is about time, like the black Mousquetaire of the legends, to remember there is active service as a distraction. I know nothing about it, but if it *is* a fight, I should think the chances are there'll be plenty of it. Anyway that's settled."

Mrs. Daventry never entered into Cis's calculations, and yet, as a man of the world, he ought to have known she was not exactly to be left out of them.

CHAPTER XII.

“GOD BLESS AND GUARD YOU, DEAREST.”

CALVERT kept his intended departure from the Royal Dunbars as quiet as he had kept his premeditated flight from York some eighteen months previously. He had very few debts in the cantonment, and had not lost anything over the race to signify, so that his arrangements were soon made. He sent his papers to the Colonel, with an application for leave home pending their acceptance, the ratification of which leave he pledged himself to await at Bombay, while the paymaster of the regiment promised to look after the sale of his effects and all minor money matters. Then he wrote to Daventry, as Chief of the Commissariat,

requesting him to lay a *dák* for him to Bombay, as he was going up there on leave, but mentioned no word of his abrupt retirement from the Royal Dunbars; and then he thought that he must go and say good-bye to Mrs. Daventry. He intended to neither mention his selling out nor the scandal about Red Ronald, which had in some measure led to it; in some measure only, because, had he liked either the corps or the country, the charge against him was of no such nature as to have compelled him to retire. It was easy to prove that he had backed Saladin for Daventry, and though Red Ronald had certainly run very badly in his hands, still jockeys cannot be held accountable always for the vagaries of the animals they bestride.

But there were too many people necessarily cognizant of Calvert's intentions for them to remain a secret many hours, and it was not long before the news of his retirement from the regiment reached Mrs.

Daventry. Young Heckington of the Royal Dunbars, who was a pretty constant frequenter of the house, brought her the intelligence, and she further drew from him that Cis Calvert's riding of Red Ronald had been severely commented on. He did not venture to insinuate that it had been more than found fault with, but Lizzie understood him thoroughly.

"Fools!" she said, indignantly; "they don't understand a race when they see it. Nothing could be more palpable than that there was something wrong with the horse. He went very different from the way he galloped the morning before."

"Pity he backed Saladin over-night," said Heckington.

"And if he did it was for my husband," Lizzie was about to burst forth; but suddenly she reflected that was not altogether a satisfactory rebutting of that unfortunate fact, insomuch as it merely proved Red Ronald's owner backed the winner, and might have

given corresponding instructions to his jockey.

“I have yet to learn, Mr. Heckington,” she replied coldly, “that because a gentleman fancies the chance of another horse more than his own, and in consequence backs it, he cannot be depended on to do his own mount justice.”

The way she said this was superb. She might have spent her days in strict and high-principled circles, instead of having been for ten years the wife of an unscrupulous gambler. As for young Heckington, he was taken completely aback, although he certainly might have known better. He knew Cis Calvert was a great favourite of Mrs. Daventry’s, and he should have known that to say anything to a man’s detriment before a woman whose particular friend he is lays you open to assault always.

At this juncture Captain Calvert was announced, and Heckington thought it a favourable opportunity to make his adieux.

Lizzie's pulse quickened a little as she came forward to welcome Cis, and it well might. She knew that he had come to say good-bye, and she had just awoke to what that meant to her. The vital question as far as she was concerned was, did it mean anything to him? This interview must show; and if he did care for her, what then? To a woman stung to madness by her husband's insults that was a rather critical thing to determine, and one in which passion was like to supersede prudence as far as she was concerned. As for Cis, although not altogether blind to Mrs. Daventry's capricious preference, he was far from having any idea of the stormy passion that lady had conceived for him. There were so many forces at work of which he knew nothing, foremost of which was her husband's brutality, and, secondly, pique at his own indifference to her fascinations. That is hardly the correct term either, for Cis showed himself very sensible of her

attractions, although he was resolute not to succumb to them. It had seemed to Lizzie almost due to herself to subjugate this man who hesitated to hold her chains. What she had begun as a matter of sport had resolved itself into earnest before she was aware of it; and she who had queened it so many years had suddenly been conquered in her turn. *Væ victis!* Cis, did he but know it, is avenging some numbers of his fellows who have experienced dour times at the hands of Circe.

“And so, Cis, you are going to leave us,” said Mrs. Daventry, as their hands met. “I told you you would some little time back, but I thought you would wait till the Royal Dunbars went home, at all events. I hear your papers are in; is it true?”

“Quite true; they went in the day before yesterday.”

“Sit down here—this low chair, and tell me all about it,” said Lizzie, as she seated herself on the couch.

"There's not much to tell. You know I am very weary of this country, and that, except yourself, I care for nobody in it. I found a letter the other night from a friend in the Lancers, telling me they were ordered to the East, that all the army was going there, and urging me if I couldn't get away from here to sell out and volunteer. Any man with a few years' experience of the service is pretty certain of employment."

"And that is your sole reason for this sudden step?"

He nodded assent.

"Loyal as ever," she murmured. "Cis Calvert, don't tell lies to me," she suddenly exclaimed; "I know better. I have heard the whole story, and how the fools dare to throw mud at you for your riding of Red Ronald. I wish, Cis, I had bitten my tongue out before I had ever persuaded you to ride him; but with all my experience of Major Daventry," she continued in mocking tones, "I never dreamt that he was capable of such

deliberate villainy. I told you there was something wrong just before you went away to dress. I know all about it now: they arranged the race for Tippoo, and as for Red Ronald, he was stopped in the stable.”

“I knew that,” rejoined Calvert; “but of course,” he continued, in very marked, deliberate tones, “*without* Major Daventry’s knowledge.”

Lizzie understood him. She saw that, though he knew pretty well what had happened, he intended no admission to her that he believed her husband cognizant of it.

“And do you mean to tell me this had nothing to do with your sudden resolve?” she asked, incredulously.

“Next to nothing. My losing my temper with old Milkinson had infinitely more. Indeed, except in indirect fashion, I may say the race had little to say to it. I must tell you about my interview with Milkinson; it was rather rich;” and then

Cis proceeded to recount his little but lively spar with the Colonel, which he did with inconceivable gusto, not even omitting Milkinson's parting shot.

Mrs. Daventry was much amused, and laughed no little at the narration.

"You must have nearly given Colonel Milkinson a fit, I am sure; and one thing, Cis, I must say, surprises me—that he didn't put you in arrest. He is so very fond of exercising his prerogative in that direction, and you seem to have given no little provocation."

"Not liking your regiment is punishable by no military statute," remarked Calvert, sententiously.

"You treat it lightly," replied Lizzie, suddenly recalling to mind that their conversation was not couched in the serious vein to which she wished to restrict it, "and it is like you to do so; but I know very well, Cis, that it is this race that is the cause of your quitting the service, and that I, miser-

able that I am, induced you to ride. Yes, I who would have cut my right hand off sooner than bring you to grief."

"Now, pray don't distress yourself upon that point," rejoined Calvert, who was not altogether unprepared for a slight scene in saying good-bye to Mrs. Daventry. "You haven't brought me to grief in the least, and if you had, upon my soul, I think I should thank you. I ought to have sold out of the Lancers, and then I should have got an appointment, and been in Bulgaria by this time. I have done no good out here, and with the exception of your friendship shall have not one ray of light to look back upon in my Indian experiences."

"Friendship, Cis! and is that *all* you have to give me?" murmured Lizzie in low, tremulous tones.

"All I have to give any woman now," he replied quietly. "I thought you understood long ago that I was a broken man when I came here. If I'd been a Frenchman it

would have been the Zouaves and Algiers, as an Englishman it was the Royal Dunbars and India."

"As if I cared one straw about that!" she replied passionately—"I who have belonged to *les enfants perdues*, as they call the marked companies of the Zouaves, all my life."

"And as such we have met, recognized each other, and shall be sworn comrades always. My love is given, as you know, hopelessly. I never hope to claim the woman I once thought to marry now."

"You told me," hissed Lizzie between her teeth, "that there was no woman concerned in the scrape that brought you to India."

"Nor was there; but the scrape separated me from the girl I was engaged to. I suppose you'll admit that was a very possible circumstance."

"And how dare you make love to me then?" exclaimed Mrs. Daventry, utterly

oblivious of the queer morality formulated in her question.

That he should dare to make love to her as a married woman seemed of no account ; but that being infatuated about a girl in England, he should presume to make love to her, Lizzie apparently considered as a crime of the deepest dye.

"I don't think I ever did exactly," replied Cis, slowly. "You know you're so awfully nice, fellows can't help themselves, and do it almost without being aware of it."

"And you class yourself with the rest!" she replied, contemptuously. "And you think I treated you as I treat them? You lie—you know better."

"I don't think you are quite fair," he replied. "You have treated me with great kindness I'll admit ; but, Lizzie, I have never been your lover—an admirer if you will, a *bon camarade* amongst the free lances, I acknowledge, bound to stand by you in your need even ; but your lover—no."

“You admit you are bound to stand by me in my need,” she exclaimed, rising and standing opposite him with her hands lightly clasped in front of her, “and I never was in greater need than now. My husband’s insults have become more than even such a woman as I can bear. Cis Calvert, I love you very dearly; save me, save me from myself, take me away with you. I will work, beg, nay lie, steal for you if needs be. You are going to the war, to rough it; don’t think that would have any terrors for me, or that you would find me a clog on your movements. I can both ride and use a pistol if needs be; but oh, Cis, don’t leave me behind.”

“My dear Lizzie, this is madness. I have told you I have no love to give you in return for your devotion. I cannot accept all when I have nothing to give in return.”

“You say you will never be able to marry that other woman. Oh, Cis, why cannot you take one who loves you so truly? I

ask so little. I am content to be your mistress,” she exclaimed, as the blood rushed to her temples, and she fell at his feet. “But oh !” she continued, as her voice sank to a whisper, “I am so weary of all this mock love-making.”

Her hands were clasped together on his knee, and the dark eyes flashed up in his face from beneath the wet lashes with a passionate eagerness that might have well turned any man’s head. Cis was no Joseph, and though he had no intention of running away with Mrs. Daventry when he called to bid her good-bye, it was just possible she might have run away with him but for one thing—she stung Cis by alluding to Miss Aysgarth as ‘that other woman.’ In total ignorance of Annie’s name, it is difficult to say what else she could have called her ; but that slight circumstance steeled Calvert’s heart.

“Impossible, my dear Lizzie,” he said gently, as he raised her to her feet. “If

I had love to give you it might be different. Point out any way in which I can be of use to you, and it shall go hard but what I manage it for you."

"Fool that I am," she exclaimed, as she dashed the tears from her eyes. "Kiss me, Cis, for once, as a sign that my madness of the last ten minutes is forgotten. There," she continued, as he touched her cheek lightly with his lips; "now we are friends once more. Sit down and don't speak to me for a little;" and Lizzie began to pace the room with rapid steps.

Calvert sat silently waiting for the concluding act of the drama. What would be her next proposition? In good truth he could not help wishing his final valedictions said, and himself on his route to Bombay. It was impossible to guess what this exasperated woman might propose doing. The Daventrys kept up appearances very fairly before the public, but Cis had been too intimate not to have had occasional glimpses

behind the scenes, and was quite aware that there was considerable friction in the workings of the domestic machinery. He had little doubt that an irreconcilable quarrel had taken place between the pair, and that Lizzie was capable of proceeding to extremities she had just afforded pretty positive proof.

Suddenly she stopped opposite him, and said fiercely, "My mind is made up. I have been his slave for years, but I'll be so no longer ; I'll bear his ill-treatment no more. No, Cis," she cried hastily, in answer to a low ejaculation on his part, "he does not beat me. A man who understands it can punish a woman more with his tongue than if he took a dog-whip to her. You say you will stand to me?" and she looked straight into his face.

"Most certainly."

"Then I want you to lend me two hundred pounds. Can you do it?"

"I should fancy so, with very little

trouble. I have all my commission money to fall back upon, and I've no doubt between our paymaster and a native sheroff I could let you have it in the course of a few hours."

"Thanks, so very much. What do I want it for? You're dying to know, but don't like to ask. Ah, well, to pay my milliner's bill, say. My husband would tell you, no doubt," she continued in sneering tones, "that the use of your purse will always console a woman for the loss of your love."

Suddenly Lizzie's voice faltered, and without further speech she burst into a fit of hysterical weeping.

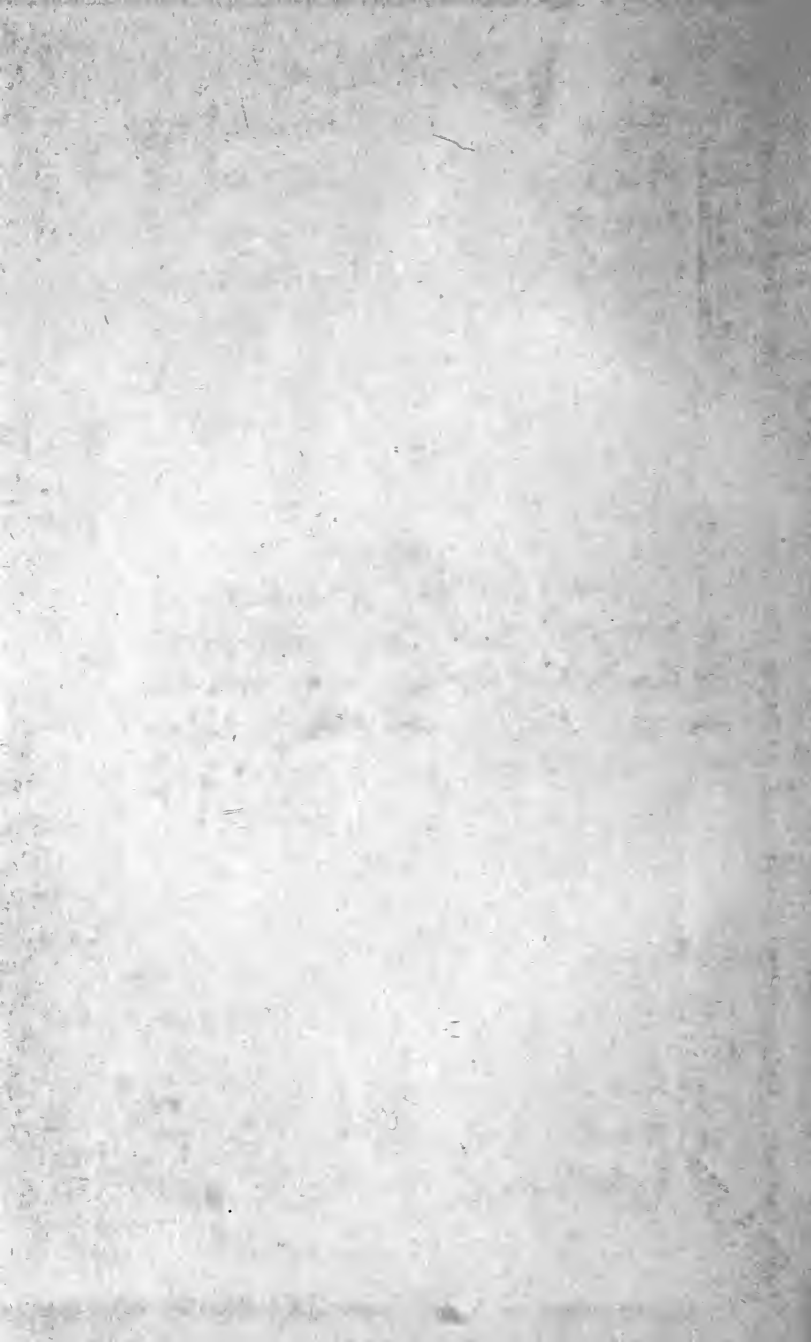
For some few minutes Cis tried in vain to soothe her. She repelled him angrily; while her convulsive sobbing shook her violently. Gradually the storm wore itself out, and at last she motioned Calvert to come near the couch upon which she had thrown herself.

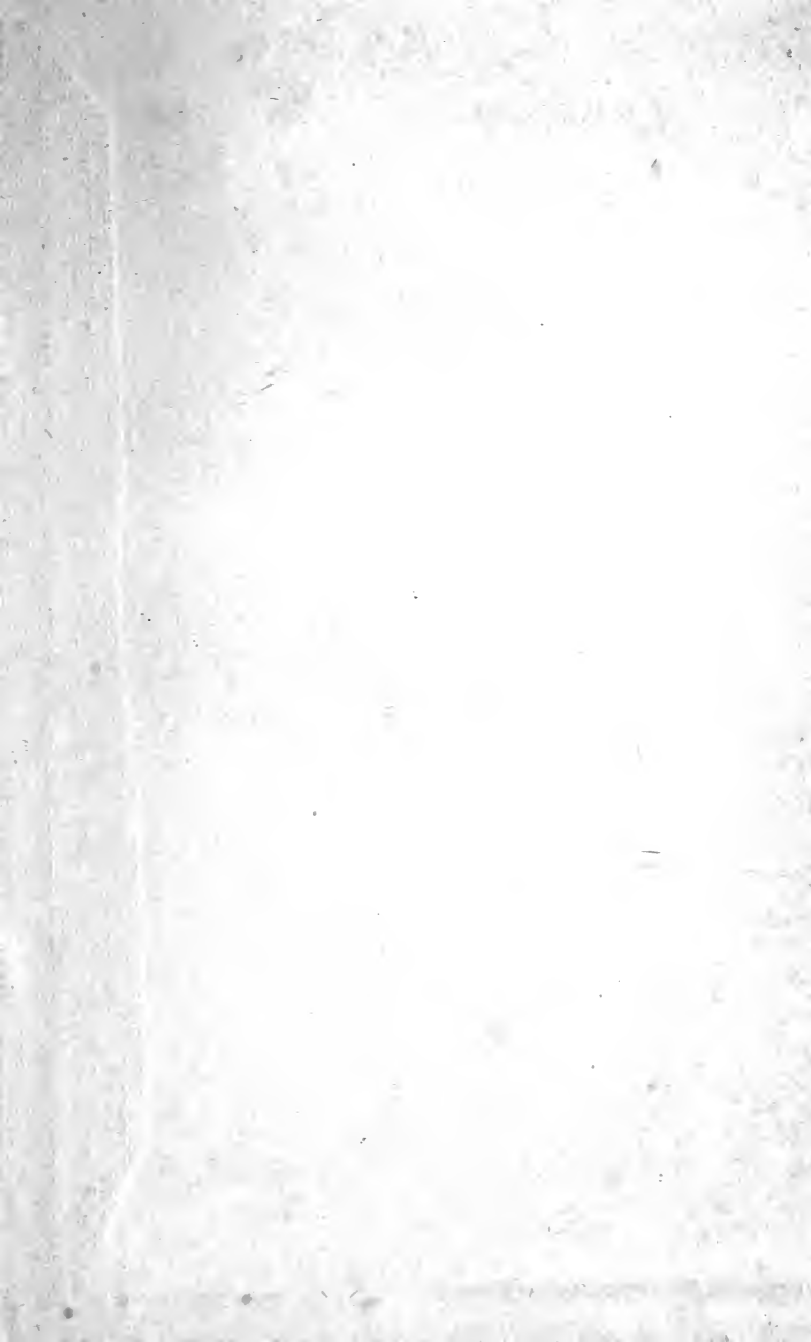
"Don't despise me utterly, Cis, because

in my misery I say hard things. I tell you no lie when I say I have never loved man as I have loved you. It is all over, and we must part. Another minute, and you shall lay your lips to mine in a final farewell. But I cannot stay here. You must find me the means for escape ; it will be easy to find the opportunity if I only have money. We may never meet again, and yet I have a presentiment we shall, and before very long. Good-bye ; God bless and guard you, dearest.” And as Cis bent over her Lizzie threw her arms round his neck, pressed one passionate kiss on his lips, then rapidly releasing him, motioned that he should leave her.

That evening Lizzie received a small bag of rupees, and a draft on a well-known banking firm in Bombay, and the morrow’s morn saw Cis Calvert on his way to Constantinople.







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